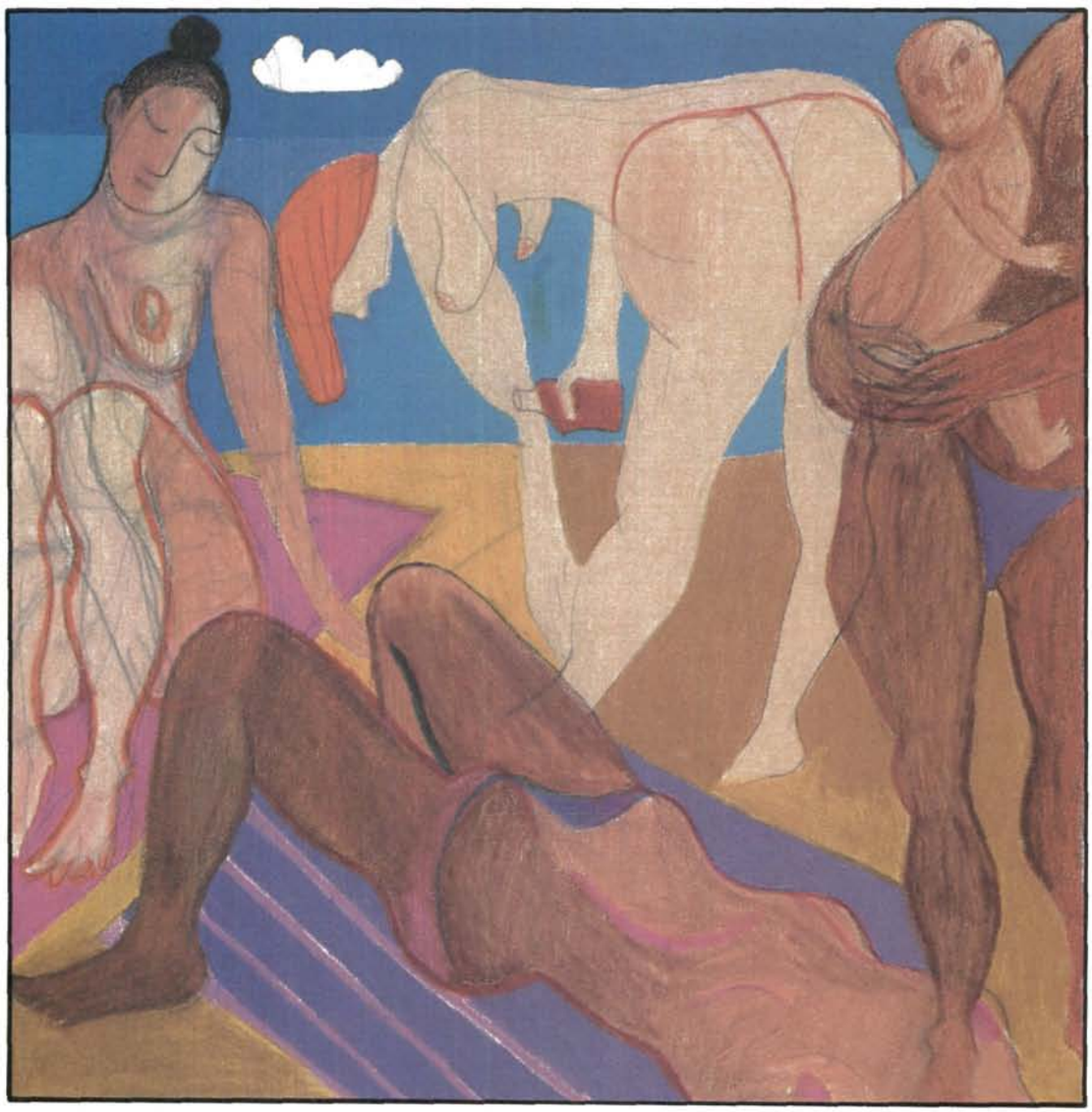
NEW STATESMAN
SOCIETY

10 August 1990
UK £1.40
S $3.50
IR £2.05
C $4.95



Fred Halliday:
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Watching women

"A man who had bad luck with women decided to live alone"
A Nadine Gordimer story

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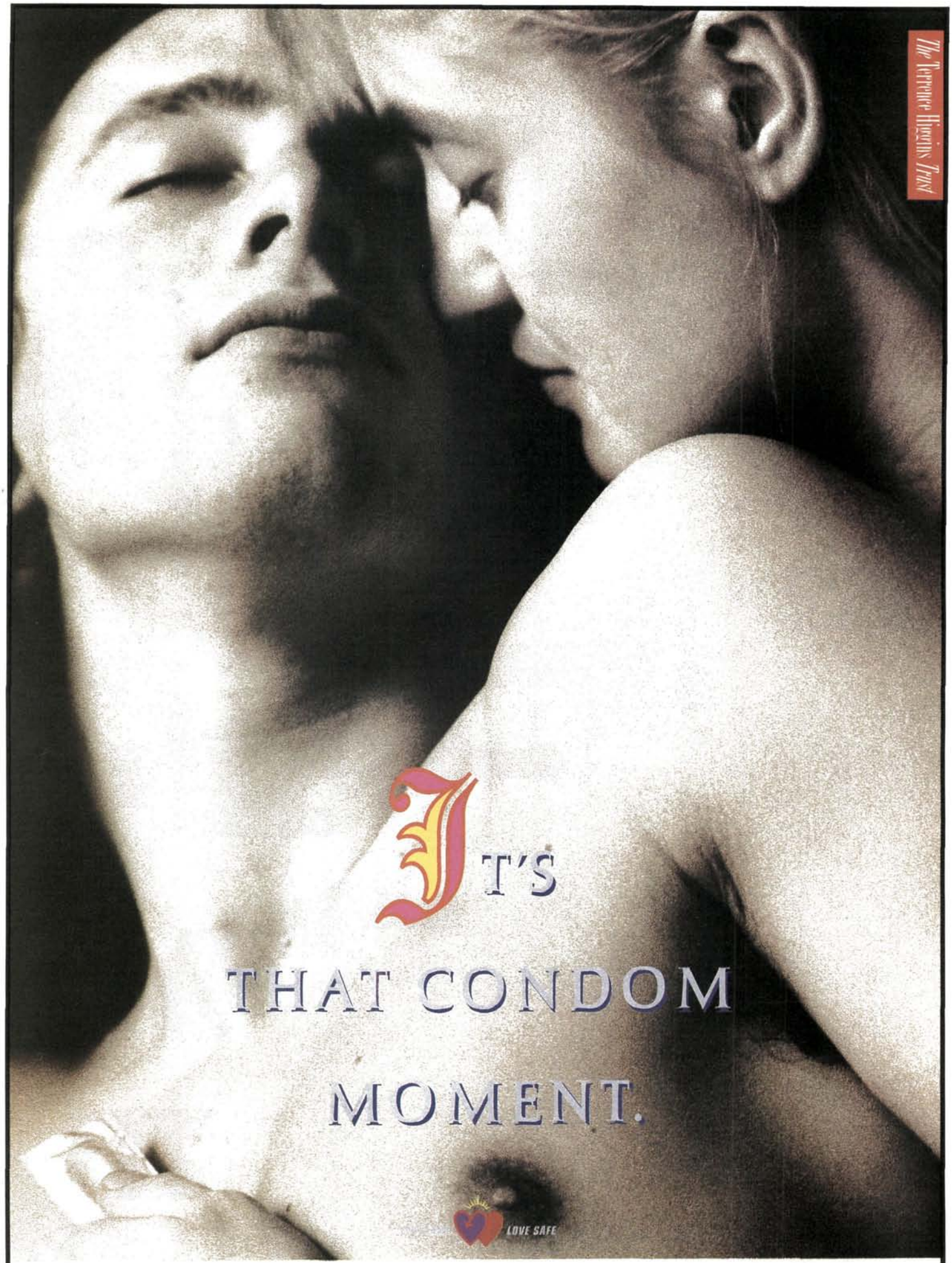

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10 August 1990 Vol 3 No 113
New Statesman Vol 119 No 3096
New Society Vol 86 No 1439
ISSN 0954-2361

©Statesman & Nation Publishing Company Ltd and Contributors
Foundation House
Perseverance Works
38 Kingsland Road
London E2 8DQ
Telex 28449 Fax 071-739 9307
Advertising 071-739 1645
Editorial/Administration 071-739 3211
Accounts/Subscriptions 071-739 1737

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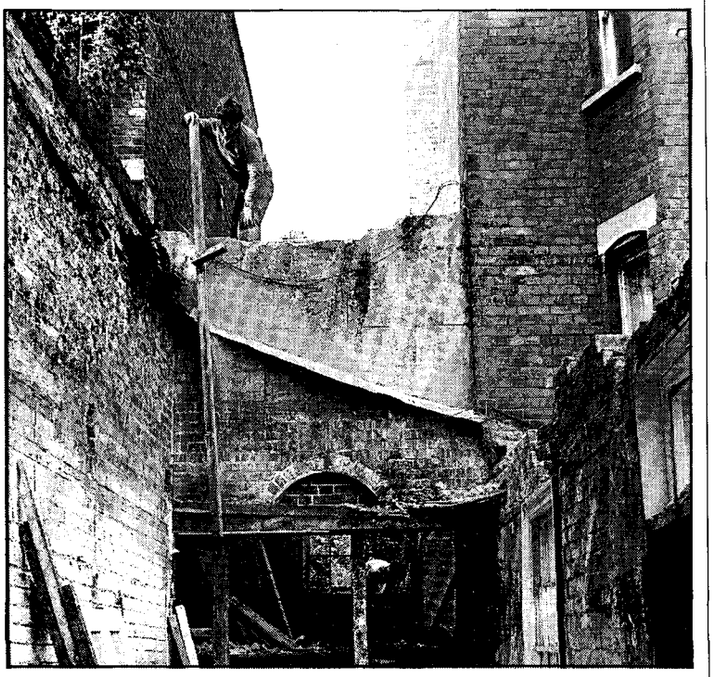
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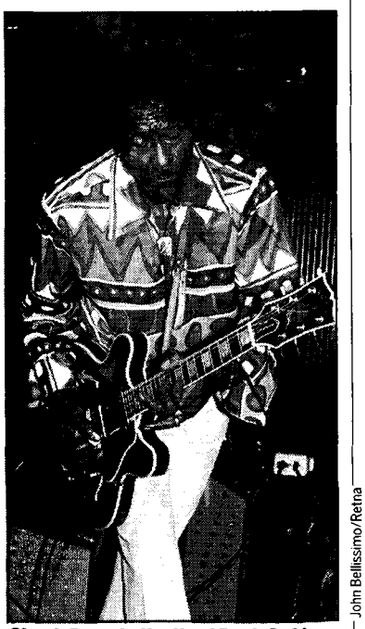
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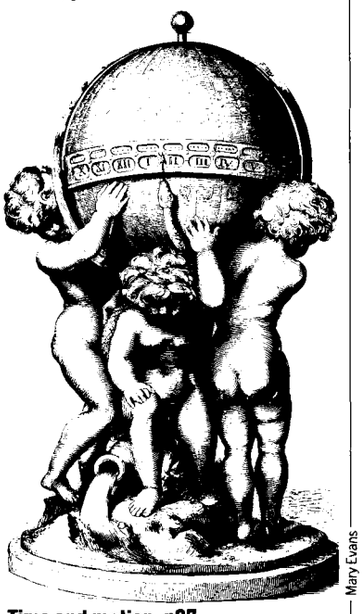
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Beating Babylon

As the risk of a desert Vietnam comes closer, the UN should take the lead in making the blockade of Iraq bite

An oil-rich regional power, led by the military and courted by the west, invades a tiny undefended neighbour. In the terror that follows, one sixth of the victim's population dies. How does the world respond to this crime? It turns the other way, announces "business as usual", and buries the act in such deep silence that the name of Indonesia's colony East Timor may bring to mind a suburban railway station, not the province grabbed by the Indonesian army with no reprisals.

That was in December 1975. There's no need to call up the shade of Hitler to find precedents for Saddam Hussein's adventure, which as we write has halted at the Saudi borders. All manner of states have got away with lawless incursions since the second world war ended, both superpowers included. The world's outrage at these events is measured on a scale marked with strategic interests, not political ideals. So if you must stoop to conquer, remember to do it in a dark corner, to a friendless state.

By its move into Kuwait, Iraq has trodden on some large and powerful toes, who will let Baghdad know how much it hurts. To put that message across strongly enough to secure a withdrawal is the first test of crisis-management thrown on to the post-cold-war stage. Diplomatic brains trained to think in the simple dualism of "spheres of influence" now have to wrap themselves around a multidimensional picture. Some, notably at the UN, seem ready for the task. Others, in the White House and its Downing Street annexe, have allowed the old knees to jerk as usual. The troops sent by the US to defend the Saudis should be carrying UN flashes on their uniforms. Instead, fear of the "wimp factor" has driven George Bush to yet another unilateral gesture. It is not too late for him to seek UN approval and direction for the force now in the Gulf.

To stop Saddam with the sanctions of Resolution 661 and the blockade now taking shape still remains the best hope of rebuffing the dictator without painting the Gulf sands red. Iraq's quarantine will no doubt be broken by countries such as Brazil and Argentina, willing to trade food for crude as the rising oil price strangles their already breathless economies. For the moment, though, an embargo can spoil Saddam's victory party. Cut off the oil exports that give Iraq 19 out of every 20 dollars it earns, stifle the imports that account for 80 per cent of the country's food, and his taste for battle will wane as discontent swells at home.

We should be honest about what this least-worst option will entail. It means we wish short-term misery on civilian Iraq. That, indeed, is the whole point: to stoke pressure from below in a popular tyranny that depends on a measure of consent. In 1982, reverses in the Gulf War brought Saddam to the gates of surrender. Then the west deemed Iran's "Islamic revolution" to be the Middle East's prime public enemy, and armed Baghdad against it. A blockade also means pushing hundreds of the *de facto* western hostages in Iraq and Kuwait into deeper peril, shielded only by the regime's fear of even nastier vengeance should it kill them.

The alternatives are worse. First, a Pentagon-planned "surgical strike" would rally wavering Arabs to Iraq and then slide into a bloody, unwinnable post-operative mess. Or we could heed the advice of Jordan and slowly accept Kuwait as a province of Iraq. Solid in his self-appointed role as pan-Arab saviour, Saddam could then quietly plot his next move against the real prize, Israel. Given the Israeli warhead capability, that would bring the use of nuclear arms in anger closer than at any time since Nagasaki.

It has been easy of late to slip into the belief that all questions of peace and war turn on superpower relations. A mentality that laid every evil at the door of one or both rival empires was always prey to the false hope that a lasting east-west truce would set the world to rights. The theft of Kuwait has demolished that error. Yet the American itch for a punitive strike, backed by US ground forces, betrays a lingering urge to act as global *gendarme*.

But Saddam could bear a thump from a truncheon—or several multinational truncheons. He could endure airborne raids for a long period, while western opinion would never permit a war of attrition in the sand. What he does have cause to dread is exhaustion and dissent at home. An economic rampart around Iraq can shake him without unduly flattering his self-image as persecuted Arab champion. Breaches would soon weaken it; but it could weaken the regime first. And if our prime minister wants Resolution 661 to prevail, she should take special care to please a state whose thirst for oil will tempt it to break ranks. That country is not the United States, but Germany.

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Sind against

There are three reasons for Benazir Bhutto's peremptory dismissal from the prime ministership of Pakistan: an official one, the real one, and a good one. The official explanation is that her administration had become incurably corrupt. The real one is that she disagreed with the army. A good one is that she turns out to be a hopeless politician.

The corruption is undeniable, but there are better ways to deal with it than to mount what Bhutto describes as a "constitutional *coup d'état*"—the police and courts could have been used. More serious was her refusal to grant the army the power to impose martial law in the province of Sind, where riots and bombings have led to hundreds of deaths. The army wants peace in Sind so that it can concentrate on Kashmir where, it believes, it has a real chance of making Indian rule untenable. But Sind is Bhutto's power base; martial law there would have been political suicide.

Such problems may be intractable. But Bhutto has also lost public favour because of her failure, over 18 months, to *do* anything. The west's romance with her was never quite shared by her compatriots: even at the height of her popularity, her Pakistan People's Party polled only 38.5 per cent of the vote. Much of that support was half-hearted, dependent on her ability to resolve the Afghanistan war, and allow Pakistan's vast population of Afghan refugees to go home. There has been no such resolution.

The man who has removed her, President Ghulam Ishaq Khan, promises elections in 90 days. The last man to make such a pledge, General Zia, spent 11 years postponing its fulfilment. But Ishaq Khan seems determined to prevent an army takeover rather than sponsor one. Pakistani democracy may yet survive, provided no one blinks. But whether Bhutto is the best leader is questionable. A martyred father, a forceful manner, and a fondness for strutting the world stage are no guarantees of political ability.

War by other means

This week Nelson Mandela called off the ANC's 30-year-old armed struggle against apartheid and the white South African government. In return, the government announced the phased release of "political" prisoners (a definition of which has not yet been reached) and promised to give "immediate consideration" to repealing the Internal Security Act, which allows detention without trial. In South Africa, the news is still being picked over by a stunned population, taken aback by the speed at which things once considered immovable become, overnight, movable.

The ANC is widely seen as having made the major concessions in order to keep negotiations in progress. There are reports of anger and unrest from ANC militants in the townships who still believe the government can be overthrown by the armed struggle. Even those who believe the ANC was happy to drop its commitment to the armed struggle, far less successful than the sanctions campaign, agree that it is an enormous *symbolic* climbdown.

Symbolic or real, the agreement will speed up discussions on a new constitution to end white rule in South Africa and the creation of some kind of interim multiracial administration. Government ministers who had initially thought they might see such a body operating by the end of next year think this date will almost certainly be brought forward.

There is now no going back if things get tough: the political fortunes of de Klerk and Mandela are now inextricably tied together. The prospect of a functioning democracy in South Africa is still a long way off: the extreme right and left have yet to be brought to the table; and the continuing killings and violent clashes in Natal province promise no easy journey.

Juggling skills

Pat Wall, the MP for Bradford North who died this week, fought off more challenges to his selection by the national Labour Party than any sitting MP. Before the last election, he was summoned to the National Executive and obliged to break with Militant, of which he was a founder member. But he never disavowed Marxism, arguing that "a river of blood separates Stalinism from real socialism."

In the by-election that will now follow, the National Executive can impose its own shortlist of candidates. Neil Kinnock didn't plan it this way, but Wall's death, as well as that of Mike Carr in Militant-dominated Bootle, has presented him with a renewed opportunity to stamp his authority on two troublesome constituencies.

Bradford North, however, is likely to present a greater challenge to Labour than the safe seat of Bootle. Wall enjoyed a majority of only 1,633 over the Conservatives, which, for the first time, may be threatened by the Islamic Party of Britain in its anti-Rushdie stronghold. The Islamic Party performed badly in Bradford's recent local elections, but it could split the vote with the support of only a small percentage of the constituency's 10,000 Muslims.

Bradford North has witnessed such vote-splitting before. In 1983, the seat passed to the Conservatives when the sitting MP, Ben Ford, whom Pat Wall ousted, secured 4,000 votes as an Independent Labour candidate. In order to satisfy "traditional" Labour voters and the Muslim community, Neil Kinnock will either have to exercise formidable juggling skills—or pick a shortlist of candidates with so few political convictions that they won't upset anybody.

Porn free

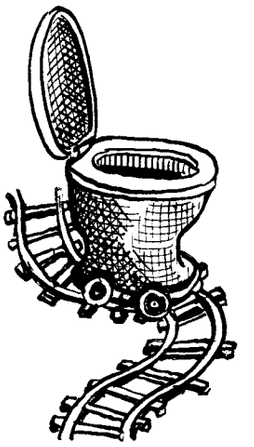
A survey on attitudes to censorship commissioned by Paul Raymond is like a survey of Christmas dietary habits commissioned by a turkey. However rigorously scientific it may be, one suspects ulterior motives.

This week Mr Raymond presented an opinion poll survey to the Home Office which strongly echoed his own beliefs and practices. Most people, it emerged, were not offended by "adult magazines and soft pornography". ("Adult magazines" means not the *Journal of the History of Ideas*, but the soft-core porn that Paul Raymond himself peddles.)

One might quibble with the interpretation of the results. For example, 48 per cent of women in the survey believed that photographs of naked women should be banned, a startlingly high figure. Even more remarkably, 23 per cent of men took the same view. It could also be argued that questions asking merely about topless women, nude women, nude men and nude couples do less than justice to the spectrum of pornographic inventiveness.

In Britain, unlike, say, the US, there is no underlying presumption in favour of freedom of expression. As with official secrecy, the principle is: when in doubt, ban it.

Paul Raymond is no standard-bearer of liberty. The current restrictions suit him, since they are lax enough to permit his wares to be displayed in newsagents, but tough enough to hamper the import of foreign competition. His survey is no contribution to an important debate, but a self-serving campaign to maintain the profitable status quo.



We have been asked, *à propos* the item in this slot last week: has British Rail ever really blamed a delay on "a signal box being eaten by a badger"? The unsatisfactory answer is that the quote certainly comes from somewhere, though possibly not BR. However, the following notice currently on display at Exeter station is guaranteed 100 per cent authentic: "As part of the improvements to the toilets on platform one, they are closed until further notice."

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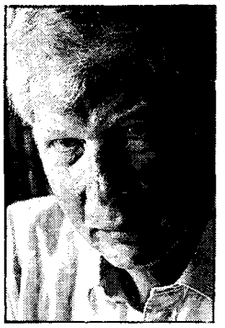
POLITICAL COLUMN

Seize the time

The Tories have major problems, but Labour still refuses to seize the initiative. What is to be done?



R W Johnson

With the ending of the parliamentary session it is a good time to ask what has been achieved since it began last November. In the most obvious sense the answer would seem to be "remarkably little". For as the session began the ICM poll published in the *Guardian* of 17 November showed Labour (49) widening its lead to 13 points over the Tories (36), with the Liberal Democrats at 6, and the Greens and SDP each at 3 per cent.

This is almost identical to the Harris poll published in the *Observer* of 22 July which showed Labour (49) leading the Tories (37) by a 12-point margin, with the Liberal Democrats at 7 and the Greens at 5. Since last November we have seen democratic revolution sweep across eastern Europe, the rapid trend towards disintegration of the USSR, the end of the cold war, the freeing of Nelson Mandela and the launching of negotiations in South Africa—but, it would appear, British politics drifts stagnantly on, unchanged and unchanging.

Well, not quite. We've seen the Walters affair, the end of the vainglorious Chancellorship of Nigel Lawson, the great poll-tax débâcle, the exit of David Owen and the SDP, and the Ridley affair. Collectively these events saw Labour surge over 50 per cent for a protracted period, opening up a 25 per cent lead over the Tories for several months.

This was a great and mainly wasted opportunity for Labour. With the electorate in such a receptive mood this was the point when an Opposition has to consolidate its position by capturing the electorate's imagination with a vision of a different future. This was what Harold Wilson did in 1963-64, launching such themes as Labour's role in the technological revolution, the need for a prices and incomes policy, the creation of the Open University.

On this occasion Neil Kinnock seems to have made the opposite calculation—that it was better virtually to hide from view and allow the electorate an undistracted view of Mrs Thatcher scoring her interest rate and poll-tax own goals. The choice of such a strategy is founded upon the old belief that Oppositions don't win elections as much as governments lose them; but also on the fact that Neil Kinnock, like George Bush, has problems with "the vision thing"; and, worse, on what appears to be a certain lack of confidence that he can get a fair crack of the whip from the media, whatever he does.

One can understand this last: Kinnock's only big TV interview in this period contained a small slip over taxation—and that slip earned him days of poor media coverage, entirely drowning out everything else he'd had to say. The problem is, though, a circular one. The media are highly sensitive to Kinnock's perceived inadequacies; which puts Kinnock under heavy pressure; which causes him to be very sparing in his public exposure; which convinces the media that he's hiding because he has something to hide; which they then delight in finding. But the low-profile strategy also guarantees that Thatcher always keeps the initiative—which makes it an odd choice when the next election is double or quits for Kinnock.

Polls suggest Kinnock and Thatcher have been around too long and both now repel more than attract

Labour has another major strategic problem too. The party has narrowed its policy differences with the Tories on almost every issue—on council house sales, on defence, on trade union and strike ballots, even on what is the right mix for a mixed economy. The problem is partly that Labour is too prone to boast about all the things it is no longer against; partly that it is now widely perceived as having no principles at all.

Moreover, as the policy differences narrow the issue inevitably becomes simply about who can best manage the economy. And all the polls show that this is Labour's Achilles' heel. Even when Labour was 25 per cent ahead, it was not perceived as more managerially competent than the Tories. The net effect, then, of all Labour's policy changes is actually to steer debate towards an area of critical weakness for the party.

The Tories are, however, far from being over the hump yet. In this respect the replacement of Lawson by Major is deceptive. Because Major is a nice, cricket-loving man and because he is perceived as blameless in the creation of the present economic mess, criticism of the Treasury has been a great deal less than it would have been had Lawson stayed on.

But Major *is* to blame—he was an important Treasury Minister during the crucial period—and the mess is really bad. Inflation is nearly 10 per cent and rising; the current balance is still running at something like minus £18 billion; the currency has been pushed up to unsustainable heights; and the CBI is forecasting a steep recession. The present economic optimism is based solely on the notion that ERM entry will be a sort of magic elixir. But it won't. If we really do enter the ERM with the pound at present levels, industry will come under a ferocious cost-squeeze which will improve nobody's temper. It is curious that Kinnock keeps forecasting an early election. Every economic indicator suggests that 1991 is already a dead duck.

David Owen's retirement from the stage was rather like the exit of an ageing gambler. Owen kept on playing with his tiny stake, suggesting that he would be prepared to wager it on a seat in the Labour Cabinet, or in helping Labour win in return for PR, or... In the end his stake simply dribbled away and after many histrionics Owen got up and left the table.

The big but quiet winner from all this is Paddy Ashdown. The Liberal Democrats' poll rating has suffered from the SDP's demise, but Ashdown's own ratings have steadily improved. Moreover, the latest Harris poll suggests that a whole fifth of Labour voters would be more likely to vote Tory if Thatcher stood down and that a fifth of Tory voters would be more likely to vote Labour if Kinnock stood down. That is, both Thatcher and Kinnock have been around too long and both now repel more than they attract.

This is Ashdown's chance—and with Owen having finally left the stage, his field is clear. It is difficult, though, for any Liberal leader to use parliament to much advantage. What Ashdown needs, desperately, is one or two really good by-elections. He is much too nice a man to say so, but what he really needs is for the present warm spell to continue and for a few elderly Tory MPs to be just a bit too energetic in the heat. After all, as the French say, where there's death there's hope.

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TAKING LIBERTIES

Jolyon Jenkins

Until last week, the Kuwaiti royal family were better known to the British as oppressors than as victims—thanks to two renegade princesses, Sheika Faria al-Sabah, and Sheika Samiya, who were sued last year by their former maid, Laxmi Swami. Mrs Swami, originally from south India, was brought to London by the princesses and stayed with them for four years in their Bayswater mansion. They starved her, whipped her, and forcibly removed two gold teeth. Last December the High Court awarded her £300,000 damages.

Mrs Swami's case is highlighted by the Anti-Slavery Society in a report presented this week to a United Nations working group. There is no weaselly metaphor at work here: slavery is literally what we're talking about. People like Mrs Swami fall through almost all the protections the law gives to citizens.

The Anti-Slavery Society says this is a situation the Home Office has supported, "however inadvertently". But it's hard to spot the inadvertence: the women are admitted to the country through a loophole in the immigration laws which was deliberately created in 1980, when the government decided not to issue work permits for overseas domestic workers. Instead, the women come as *visitors* (even though visitors aren't normally allowed to work); and they are not allowed to leave the service of the employer with whom they came.

This anomaly confuses immigration officers, who don't know what stamp to put in the passports. As a result, there are no statistics kept on the number of domestic workers admitted. There are about 100 runaways each year, but this must be a very small proportion of the total.

Those who escape may not stay in Britain beyond the date in their passports, but have no money with which to leave. They are often deeply in debt, either because of high payments to an agent who recruited them, or because they have borrowed money to remit to their families back home (an important component of those countries' domestic economies). The Home Office may decide that they are illegal entrants, and can lock them up indefinitely as a purely "administrative" matter. If this happens they will have no opportunity to apply for bail. In an internal immigration service manual the government justifies this on the chilling grounds that alleged illegal entrants are "by definition outside the legal system".

It's common in the Gulf for even only moderately well-off families to have one or two domestic servants, often from the Philippines, and frequently qualified to a far higher level than their menial jobs demand. Such families often travel to Europe for several months each year (although Spain is becoming a more popular destination than Britain) and recreate their lifestyles in all possible respects, including bringing the servants. Why the Home Office should feel obliged to ease this process is a mystery. With the Gulf likely to remain unstable, London seems bound to acquire a large population of wealthy refugees—with servants whose status will become even more irregular and anomalous. For how long can this be tolerated?

Over the past few days there has been much head-shaking about Kuwait's division of its residents into those who have citizenship rights and those that do not. It's ironic that the British government should actively have connived in transplanting the same system here.

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DIARY

Sean French

I wasn't going to attack the royal family this week but my patience finally snapped late on Sunday night when I heard from Sir Alastair Burnet that one of the Queen Mother's particularly glowing attributes is that she goes to the races so often.

I know, as Tony Benn argued trenchantly in Monday's *Guardian*, that one must separate objections to the monarchy as an institution from one's views on the current pampered and overpaid inhabitants of the castles and stately homes, but in the face of endless royal babies and claims that Prince Charles is speaking on behalf of the ordinary citizen that becomes increasingly difficult to do.

Am I becoming more sensitive or is the odious fawning surrounding our royal family on the increase? This is a sign of the system at work preserving itself. The British royal family is a peculiarly difficult virus to stamp out because it constantly mutates in order to survive in new environments by infecting people previously considered resistant. Even the most implacable opponents find themselves co-opted and absorbed. Sometimes it only takes an invitation to a Palace garden party to turn a die-hard republican into a gawping royalist peering over the serried ranks of minor functionaries in their morning suits. If that fails, then a few letters after your name might well do the trick.

It has been particularly disappointing to see even the more sceptical newspapers capitulating. As part of their anti-establishment stance, Rupert Murdoch and Andrew Neil used to be, if anything, hostile to an institution that represented all that was archaic about British society. But establishments change, as do their members, and the *Sunday Times* has been running at great length the almost parodically sycophantic portrait of the Queen Mother by Sir Alastair.

Even the *Independent*, which had made a policy of underplaying royal "events", had a front-page colour piece reporting on the Queen Mother's birthday.

And as for Neil Kinnock, who welcomed the recent grotesque royal pay rise with such grovelling enthusiasm, someone ought to remind him that the end of *Animal Farm*, in which there is no longer any difference between the pigs and the men they overthrew, was not intended by George Orwell as a model for the socialist way forward.

It's an interesting phenomenon that Labour prime ministers have been even more deferential to the monarchy, if that's possible, than Conservative ones.

I shall leave instructions with my ministers that if I am ever observed praising the royal family as defenders of our liberties, I am to be buried with garlic in my mouth and a stake through the heart.

I found Robertson Davies's collection of essays disappointing (it's called *Enthusiasms* and is published by Viking) but there was one interesting example of his regular column which dealt with the subject of memory. He referred to a memory test that had been devised by a Dr Charles Winick and given to 80 students in Queens College, New York.

Readers may like to test themselves on it, so here it is in full: 1 What was the name of your third-grade teacher? 2 What did you have for dinner last Tuesday? 3 When did you go on the first train trip you took without a grown-up? 4 What was your telephone number before the present one? 5 What did you do on your 21st birthday? 6 What was the first book you read outside of school? 7 What was the name of the first person you went out with alone? 8 What's the name of the person you were introduced to most recently? 9 Who was the first acquaintance you met when you left your home yesterday morning? 10 What was the theme of the last sermon you heard? 11 What was the name of the leading character (not the actor's real name) in the last movie you saw? 12 What was the name of the last novel you read? 13 Do you remember how much income tax you paid last year? 14 What suit or dress did you wear last Thursday? 15 What was your first favourite song?

I've never been very good at this sort of questionnaire, or at any kind of formal job interview, for that matter, because what are meant to be simple questions always confuse me. I don't understand question seven, for example. Does "went out with" in this context mean "exit from your house with", "go out for some social reason" or "go out on a date with"? Nowadays, in fact, when someone talks of a person they went out with they actually mean someone they stayed in with and had sex, but this particular questionnaire was compiled in the relatively innocent fifties and I don't think Dr Winick was prying to that degree.

Other questions are entirely inappropriate for me. I have never attended a church service except where it accompanies a wedding, and so the theme of the last sermon I heard, as of every sermon, was about the joys of matrimony. Question six presupposes that I ever read a book *inside* school. And what is a "first favourite song"? Does Dr Winick mean the "our song" that every couple was supposed to have during the fifties or does he mean the song in the charts at any particular moment that you happen to enjoy listening to most? And any freelance journalist who can answer question 13 with an honest yes ought to be sentenced to five years of sorting out my accounts. No wonder I have never got any job for which I have been interviewed.

More than this, though, the questions reminded me of what an emotion-saturated faculty memory is. Some of the emotions aren't exactly Proustian. What would I have thought when I was having dinner last Tuesday—if I actually did have dinner last Tuesday—if I had been told that within a few days it would have vanished from my mind entirely? As a Beckett character puts it with customarily gloomy reassurance, "I can't remember that, but tomorrow I won't remember this."

In fact there were only three questions I was confident of answering correctly (1, 5 and 10) and even those were the cause not for satisfaction but for wistful thoughts about lost schooldays, my twenty-first birthday and how long ago it now is and whether I shouldn't have organised something better for it, and that soon we'll all be dead and forgotten, just as if we had never existed. Just the standard sort of way in which we all think about the days that are no more.

I have a vague idea that I had some telling point I was going to conclude with on the subject. Now what was it?

ROGER WODDIS

Oilier-than-thou

"There is no place for naked aggression in today's world."—President Bush

The weather is somewhat cooler,
They say there's a chance that rain
May fall on a certain ruler
They're calling Saddam Insein,
And those who remember Hitler
Will sigh, "Here we go again."

While sanctions hurt hungry Arabs
And fellaheens on the farms,
We try to be highly moral
When setting off war's alarms,
Forgetting the thief of Baghdad
Was furnished with Western arms.

The law of poetic justice
Hits nauseous humbugs hard:
The tyrant was taught by masters,
Now hoist with their own petard.
How can you blame a fellow
For protecting his own back yard?

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UNION OF CONSTRUCTION, ALLIED TRADES AND TECHNICIANS

UCATT
SAFE SITE CAMPAIGN

Eleven years of Tory deregulation have turned construction into Britains most dangerous industry. Last year alone there were 156 construction deaths. UCATT believes that only by organisation and regulation will we make construction into a safer industry. We want all construction workers whether directly employed or self employed to have access to representation and bargaining rights. Most importantly, we want all construction workers to have the right to work in a safe industry.

UCATT Safe Site Campaign, campaigning for:

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2. **Improved training.** Every construction worker should have the right to training, including safety training, to industry recognised levels.
3. **More Safety Representatives.** Site Safety Representatives play a major part in improving safety on site but there are still not enough of them.
4. **Heavier Fines.** The average magistrates fine against an employer who's negligence caused a fatal accident is still less than £500 and the maximum remains at £2000. UCATT wants to see much heavier fines and in the case of serious negligence the introduction of custodial sentences.
5. **More Health and Safety Inspectors.** There are little more than a hundred H&S Inspectors to cover all of Britain's construction sites. In the absence of the government doing anything to improve this position UCATT has offered to lend the services of its own experienced officials as part time site inspectors.
6. **Union Organisation.** To achieve a safe industry we need a fully organised work force. That's why recruitment is central to our Health and Safety Campaign.

Albert Williams General Secretary
George Brumwell Executive Council Chair

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Sally & Richard Greenhill

DEATH

Like it or lump it

Three men die each week on our lethal building sites. Maria Manning went among the casuals and subbies to find out why safety is nobody's business

Paul Elvin, aged 24, was electrocuted on his first day at work on platform 11 of Euston Station, just a few weeks before his daughter Kylie was born. When the aluminium pole he was carrying touched a 25,000-volt high-tension overhead cable, the shock which passed through his body struck his kidneys, and burned off his hands and feet.

Paul lay, on fire, on the platform for several minutes; British Rail staff were afraid the current would electrocute anyone who handled him. Eventually a young policeman crossed the tracks and pulled him clear when he saw that Paul risked touching the metal pole again as his arms flailed while trying to raise himself.

These are the horrific details behind the short news paragraphs that routinely record deaths in the construction industry: on average, three workers are killed every week.

Ann Elvin, Paul's mother, remembers too well the phone call informing her of the accident, her panic-stricken attempt to establish which of her two sons had been hurt, and then the dash across London to University College Hospital in a police car with its sirens blaring: "Don't let anyone tell you that electrocution means instant death—that's just false comfort. Paul lived for 20 hours, and Lorna (Paul's girlfriend) and I spent 17 of them with him. He was conscious for some of the time and kept asking to go home. At one point he even tried to get out of the bed to go home." The doctors told her they had considered amputating his arms and legs in an effort to save him, but the damage to his internal organs meant he had no chance of survival.

After this ordeal, Ann became determined to find out as much as possible about the circumstances around Paul's death. Paul's job was to fit shop windows at the front of Euston for a company involved in the station development. But he was sent to work on the platform instead. No one explained the danger of the overhead cables. "The Railway Inspectorate told me Paul could have been killed crossing a road, but that's not the point. We weren't prepared to have Paul's life reduced to the value of a small fine."

Ann's council flat in Rotherhithe became the centre of operations for a remarkable battle to force the authorities to make proper and thorough investigations. She gave up her job as a home help and, in the 19 months since her son was killed she became detective, parliamentary lobbyist, legal expert and general public nuisance.

With Lorna, she went to Euston and took notes on the site. They walked from the station to the hospital to establish the distance between the two, and tried to discover why it was a full half-hour between the incident and admittance to hospital. Ann tracked down Paul's workmate, who had been deemed to be acting foreman on the day her son was killed, even though he had left London to work on another job. She forced the CID and the transport police to take statements from him. Both women sat up until two or three each morning compiling a dossier of evidence and drafting letters to anyone who might help—including Prince Charles and Mrs Thatcher. Ann put down what she wanted to say in her terrible handwriting, Lorna copied it out neatly. With Lorna and Kylie she led a demonstration at the Railway Inspectorate's headquarters, and presented a 7,000-signature petition to the House of Commons.

Dealing with the authorities was "like trying to get around Spaghetti Junction". "Everywhere we went we were told to go to some other department, but we persevered. They'd tell me things just to get rid of me, I would go away and check, and come back and tell them 'you're wrong'—I had some right ding-dongs on the phone."

When the Railway Inspectorate, jointly with the Health and Safety Executive (HSE), agreed to prosecute the employers for criminal negligence, she was not satisfied. Despite a verdict of "accidental death" returned at Paul's inquest, she badgered the DPP to examine the merits of Paul's case with a view to a prosecution for manslaughter, but he has refused to prosecute.

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This suggests the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP) is continuing to review cases only where a verdict of "unlawful killing" has been returned. As David Bergman has pointed out (see *NSS* 15 June), the "accidental death" verdicts effectively protect company directors and managers from facing manslaughter charges, even though liability is clearly defined under the Health and Safety at Work Act as failure to protect workers from "obvious and serious risk of physical harm". Accidental death verdicts define the deaths of building workers simply as acts of fate, the consequences of which must be bravely borne by bereft families. Coroners politely offer condolences, but can offer no effective redress.

An analysis of fatalities in the 1988 HSE report "Blackspot Construction" showed that 90 per cent of deaths were preventable and, in 70 per cent of cases, positive action by management could have saved lives. In 1988 the Construction Safety Campaign was launched by rank-and-file workers as a response to the massive increases in deaths, injuries and work-related illnesses in the industry. Over 1,500 building workers have been killed in the last ten years, and between 1981 and 1988 the number of fatal and major accidents as a proportion of workers employed increased by more than 65 per cent.

Apart from this statistical evidence, Tony O'Brien, the secretary of the Construction Safety Campaign, has noted a new arrogance and aggression on the part of employers: "Building sites became death-traps as employers blatantly flouted every regulation in the book. On one site a man who was killed was covered with a blanket and everyone was made to carry on working around the corpse until the end of the shift."

At the centre of the current safety crisis is the issue of lump labour. Whether Paul Elvin himself was part of the lump is a matter of dispute—although the horrific nature of his death is not—but what is not in doubt is that there are 722,000 building workers on some form of the lump, lacking the security of permanent employment. Lump labour has neither employment protection nor effective safety protection, and, if workers complain, they are often sacked on the spot.

Declan, a 22 year old from Armagh, told me what it's like on the inside of the system. "If you're casual, looking for a 'start' [a day's labour] you go down at six in the morning to the 'pick-ups' on the Cricklewood Broadway. The subbies [subcontractors] get their breakfasts in the cafés down there, that's the cattle market. They look you up and down, treat you like a piece of shite, then if you're lucky you'll get into the back of a van with the bags of cement and be driven to a job."

In the north London pub where we were talking, there seemed to be a long queue for the gents—but the queue wasn't for that at all. Tucked away at the back of the room next to the toilet is a small, glass, bank-teller's booth where a man sat cashing cheques. "That's an arrangement," Declan explained, tapping his nose conspiratorially. "When you get your day's or week's money, if you've used a bum name 'cause you're on the double—drawing dole like, while you're working—they'll cash your cheque here if it's from a subbie on their list. If they don't know the subbie, they won't touch it because it might bounce from here to Dublin and back. They charge us 2 per cent, and if everyone buys a round of drinks, you can see how the publican is on to a winner."

Declan and his mates are unskilled labourers; their wages are rather less than those of the Loadsamoney carpenters: "The going rate for us has been £30 a day after deductions. But it's gone very slow altogether, and you'll be lucky to get £26 or even £23 right now. The students undercut us in the summer—they'll work for fucking peanuts."

In the last decade the size and nature of the lump has changed. In the early eighties, thousands of small and medium-sized building firms went to the wall, and building workers were forced to earn a living without the protection of secure employment. The large firms increasingly switched from employing labour directly to management fee contracting—organising multiple sub-contractors on an *ad hoc* basis for individual projects. National insurance and pension contributions, and holiday and sick pay, could all be dispensed with. Also, by skirting the National Working Rule (NWR) agreements that fix basic pay and conditions in the industry, they were able to expand and contract labour forces—without recruitment or redundancy costs—in an unstable economic climate. Sub-contractors of course used self-employed or casual labour and thus the black economy of the lump became formalised and central to the construction industry.

The tenuous and insecure relationships that workers have with subcontractors means that safety is a commodity that workers like Declan cannot afford: "You keep your head down, and you don't step out of line. The subbies can smell a troublemaker. If they send you up dodgy scaffolding you go up—otherwise you're straight off the site, and the word gets round so you don't get a start anywhere else. If there's an accident, that's tough, because we're not insured. I've heard of them carrying a man off the site and putting him round the corner outside an ordinary house before they'll call an ambulance. The story then is that you fell cleaning the windows. Nowadays nobody worries about safety. It's hard enough getting a job, things are that slack. Nobody goes in for safety any more. And that's not just wee sites, I've worked Piccadilly, the West End, everywhere."

Building sites became death-traps as employers flouted every rule in the book. A man who was killed was covered with a blanket and everyone had to work around the corpse until the shift ended

Many believe that safe sites and lump labour are incompatible. Up to two years ago there was actually outright hostility to the lump and strongly unionised sites would attempt to black lump labour. But today there is a new mood of pragmatism, at least at the level of the union executives. The Union of Construction, Allied Trades and Technicians has initiated a deal with the building employers to get recognition for unionised self-employed workers, and has amended the NWR agreements to cover them.

The "check-off" deals between union officials and building firms whereby union recognition is secured and the employers agree to deduct subscriptions from pay are regarded with suspicion by grassroots activists. They claim that "tame" members recruited this way are in no position to challenge employers on safety issues. Union executives on the other hand argue that the size and entrenched position of the lump in the construction labour market mean it cannot be simply excluded, so it is better to organise and represent these workers in any way possible.

Whichever position one takes in these wrangles, nobody sees workers on various forms of the lump as individually to blame. Paul Elvin makes an unlikely villain of the piece, and Declan and his mates are more aptly described as the lump's victims. Workers such as these need someone to protect them. After all, it's they who know that the costs of casualisation are to be measured in the deepening mound of dead bodies. ●

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Coming down

Erica Jong moves from the alpha of masochism to the omega of spiritual growth in her conversation with Ros Coward

Erica Jong was anxious that she wouldn't be photographed while touching up her make-up. "Please don't take my picture while I'm doing this. I can see the caption already. 'Still vain at 48.'" "The *New Statesman* wouldn't do a thing like that," I replied, not entirely with conviction. "Don't you be so sure. Paul Theroux called me 'the great pudenda' in the pages of the magazine in 1973."

Endless references to her appearance and sex life come with having what she calls, "the most absurd public image possible. People expect me to be nine feet tall, carrying a cat-o'-nine-tails and wearing leather underwear."

The image isn't altogether unfair though. Erica Jong is after all the person who gave the world, "the zipless fuck", the female equivalent of the male fantasy of sex with no ties and no fumbled obstacles either. Her novel *Fear of Flying* was a classic of its era. It was lighter, slighter and funnier than *Kinflicks* (Lisa Alther) and *The Women's Room* (Marilyn French). But it hit the same nerve of new concerns about women's sexual self-discovery. "And I've carried it around my neck like a millstone ever since," says Jong.

But if I'm honest, that's why I wanted to talk to her too. I was interested as to what happens in the Age of Aids to a writer who made her reputation as an exponent of sexual self-discovery. And I was particularly interested to discover that her new novel, *Any Woman's Blues*, took up two themes that dominate contemporary women's writing: women's sexual masochism, and the search for spiritual solutions to disordered social relationships.

Any Woman's Blues is another raunchy, explicit novel about sex, but this time about a woman, "impossibly addicted to a younger man". Like *Fear of Flying*, the novel is often flippant, even facetious, with more than its fair share of silly names and silly situations. But behind the tendency to ridicule is a serious, almost formulaic question; how do women disentangle themselves from abusive, masochistic obsessions with men?

I've seen how, as women get more successful in the boardroom, they need more and more domination in the bedroom

I asked Erica Jong if she worried that in detailing a masochistic obsession she might endorse the cliché that women desire sexual humiliation. But Jong insists that, in spite of lurid descriptions of her heroine Leila Sand, humbled before the crooked cock of her young, leather-clad superstud, *Any Woman's Blues* is actually a moralistic book about "our crazy addictive society".

"My heroine, Leila, is like many contemporary women. In many ways she's very successful, yet here she is submitting to this snake-hipped cad. She rises in the outside world and falls in the bedroom. I've seen this going on all around me. I've done it myself. I've seen how, as women get more successful in the boardroom, they need more and more domination in the bedroom. We win all this power and then find someone to dominate us in our personal lives."

It's certainly an inescapable fact that the last ten years have seen more and more writing on this theme, especially in contemporary women's fiction, by no means all of it critical. Julie Burchill even has a heroine in *Ambition* who seems to thinks it's a sign of her freedom if a man shouts "bitch" and "cunt" as she gets laid. Wasn't Erica Jong worried that with all her split-crotch panties, the obsession with the length of a man's penis, and women's submission to men's power and wealth, she was just adding to this genre?

"No. That kind of writing is madness. When I had Leila meet the dominatrix in SoHo, she was hitting rock bottom where she sees a world inhabited by people who can't love and have replaced sex with power. I'm interested in how you stop punishing yourself like that."

But what, I asked, of the fact that Leila has an orgasm? Since our society believes pleasure justifies anything, doesn't that end up affirming manipulative clichés of what women really want? Erica Jong laughed. "Well, we don't always approve of the things that make us come. We are sometimes turned on by our dark side. I can read *The Story of O* and be turned on by it, though I wholly disapprove of what it chronicles. I believe in the banality of evil. I believe even ordinary people can participate in torture and death camps. Our only hope is if we can admit we have that within us. If you can admit it then you can free yourself from it. But if you deny it and imagine you are pure, that's when you are in danger."

So why did she think women, after all these years of feminism, would tolerate such abuse? "It's partly because men haven't changed as much as women have. They are not as evolved and so sometimes you'd rather have a heartless bastard than nobody! But it also has to do with atoning. It's a kind of guilt we feel because our lives are so different from our mothers' and grandmothers'. These women told us exactly what 'a good woman' would and should do. But the world has changed. So we feel guilt. Guilt every time we leave our children; guilt every time we make more money than our men. So how do we expiate that guilt? In the bedroom with some bastard! It's a kind of self-punishment."

Any Woman's Blues unfortunately doesn't develop these psychological perceptions, as Erica Jong has a thesis to prove. She is convinced that women's inability to break with an abusive cycle is part of "the main problem of our age"; that of addiction. Like many Americans she has accepted a way of looking at society in rather simplistic terms of "addictions" and "addictive personalities". And like many women on both sides of the Atlantic, she was particularly

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Jillian Edelstein

influenced by Robin Norwood's book, *Women Who Love Too Much*, which argues that relationships are as addictive as substances. The book, says Jong, was her first introduction to Al-Anon, an organisation catering for the relatives, partners and dependants of addicts. And from the way she says it, it sounds as if her interest was far from academic.

Jong describes her life, like Leila's, as "saved" by the addiction programmes. "We've just been through a decade of absolute obsession with material things, with making yourself feel happy through externals—BMWs, money, drugs, sex, obsessive love affairs. Sooner or later, though, you have to cultivate your own garden. Those who find sanity have to find it on their own. It's not given by a relationship, however good. It's not given by substances, or money. It's given by the struggle to find your own centre."

Jong doesn't believe in a patriarchal God with a white beard, but she does admit to "falling on her knees before images of Mary" and to "finding God in the communitas". The route to "her centre" went, like Leila's, via the Twelve Steps, a spiritual growth programme which she calls "the great spiritual movement of our time. It's like early Christianity at the end of the Roman empire. On the surface there's all this rabid materialism, while underneath you have people in the basements of churches, holding hands and saying the Lord's Prayer."

Started in the 1930s in the US, the Twelve Steps was originally used by Alcoholics Anonymous, but now the programme is employed widely to cope with any number of physical and medical problems, ranging from Aids to love-addiction. The Twelve Steps is a "life programme" teaching "life skills" and includes recognising "a greater power or spirit than oneself". At least one group, Emotions Anonymous, is using the programme in Britain. A mixture of behaviourism, moral teaching and meditation, the attraction of the Twelve Steps is great in societies where so many people are turning inwards for solutions to feelings of social and personal malaise. Jong talks about "taking responsibility for herself", of "admitting to all feelings", of meditating, "in short taking an inventory of yourself and not blaming others for your problems."

Jong is currently a very poised person. She's been joined by her attorney husband in London and they're looking forward to sharing their first anniversary with Jong's 12-year-old daughter. It's hard to believe as she talks of God and her contempt for New York materialism that she gave the world "the zipless fuck". But there's more continuity than might at first appear.

Fear of Flying was about saving your life by learning to fly. *Any Woman's Blues* is about how to save your life when the plane crashes. Jong is still just as committed to finding out the truth about oneself, whether it is sex or God. She says as much herself, but without perhaps acknowledging that the search for a single absolute truth might be an illusion wherever you seek it. ●

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Judge dreadful

As the Supreme Court liberals hang up their robes, Alexander Cockburn looks at the two faces of US justice

I had just been reading an interview with Justice Brennan in *Irish America* when news came that he was hanging up his robes. Brennan's reminiscences are laced with a sense of history, a sympathy for the travails of ordinary humans. The younger crowd on the Supreme Court doesn't look as if it spends much time thinking about how life looks from the bottom of the barrel.

Brennan described how his father, an Irish immigrant, got a job shovelling coal at Ballantine's brewery in Newark. He soon found that conditions were bad for the workers there, so "he started organising within Ballantine's and then spread around to the other breweries around the city. Remember, there were no trade laws to help you in those days."

Brennan's father did so well in this strike that he began to rise in the ranks of organised labour around Newark. Then came a statewide trolley strike, eventually broken because the police moved at the behest of the McCarter family who, as Brennan recalls, "really ran the state". In an effort to head off a more sweeping onslaught, the city bigwigs made Brennan's father a police commissioner, but "he promptly showed where he stood in the labour disputes and then that led to one fight after another." In the end he and his comrades "swept away the whole government", and he wound up running the Department of Public Safety. This paradigm, that justice exists to serve everyone, stuck with Brennan all his life.

Bosch, a Cuban, convicted felon, was paroled in Miami and is now, relatively speaking, a free man

Supreme Court judges Brennan, Marshall and Blackmun all turned 21 around the time of the stock market crash of 1929 and spent their early professional years watching the Depression gnaw through the country. Marshall's father, William, the grandson of a slave, was a yacht club steward. Blackmun's father ran a grocery and hardware store in St Paul. His son has recalled that they lived in a blue-collar neighbourhood and "because I grew up in poor surroundings, I know there's another world out there that we sometimes forget about."

The next cohort of Justices is White, Stevens and Rehnquist, born respectively in 1917, 1920 and 1924. White, a law-and-order judge, had a dad in the notoriously anti-union lumber business. Stevens, somewhat of a liberal individualist, was the son of a wealthy businessman in Chicago. Chief Justice Rehnquist spent his childhood in a well-to-do suburb of Milwaukee (which had a socialist mayor in the 1930s). His father was a wholesale paper salesman who never attended college.

The rest of Reagan's appointees to the Court—Sandra O'Connor, Antonin Scalia and Anthony Kennedy—all turned 21 in the swell of the Eisenhower 1950s, when the tide still purported to lift all boats. O'Connor's father was a rancher in the south west. Scalia's father, Eugene, was a professor of romance languages who had emigrated from Italy, and Kennedy's old man was a Catholic Republican lawyer and lobbyist well known in Sacramento.

What about David Souter, George Bush's new nominee? He celebrated his 21st birthday in the year Richard Nixon lost the presidential race to John Kennedy, at the dawn of the rebellious decade. His father was a banker. The family moved from Massachusetts to New Hampshire. It doesn't seem good for liberals.

The ascetic Souter looks to me like a pressure cooker of psychic repression. Maybe he despised his father as a Nixon man and, if confirmed, will explode into judicial activism and spend the next half century getting his own back. Let's hope so. After the 1960s, the soil that nurtured judicial greatness of the Brennan type looks thin indeed.

Take, for example, the contrasting cases of Orlando Bosch and Joe Doherty. Orlando Bosch is a Cuban, convicted felon, a man once charged with master-minding the bombing of a civilian airliner in which 73 people died. On 17 July he was paroled in Miami and is now, relatively speaking, a free man. He has to wear an electronic ankle trace bracelet, can go outside for only three hours a day, must not speak to anti-Castro militants, and has his telephone tapped.

Joe Doherty is an Irishman, neither charged nor convicted of any offence against US criminal law. On 18 June he began his eighth year in a tiny cell in the Metropolitan Correctional Center in Manhattan; he is now the longest-held prisoner in the history of that institution. No fewer than eight times—most recently only a few weeks ago in the US Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit—he has prevailed in court and Immigration and Naturalization Service hearings against attempts by the government to deport him.

Yet, today, Bosch is free on parole. Doherty, denied bail, is confined to a matchbox cell in a prison never designed for long-term occupancy, hence offering none of the facilities other prisons are compelled to offer. See the double standard maintained by the Bush administration eager to pander to political friends in Miami's Cuban-American community, and in London.

Start with Bosch. In 1968, his anti-Castro group Accion Cubana blew up a Japanese freighter in Tampa, damaged a British vessel off Key West and bombed eight diplomatic or tourist offices in New York and Los Angeles. The aim was to punish nations doing business with Cuba. Bosch was convicted that same year of firing a bazooka at a Polish freighter in Miami harbour and sentenced to 10 years in federal prison. He was paroled four years later and in 1974 fled the

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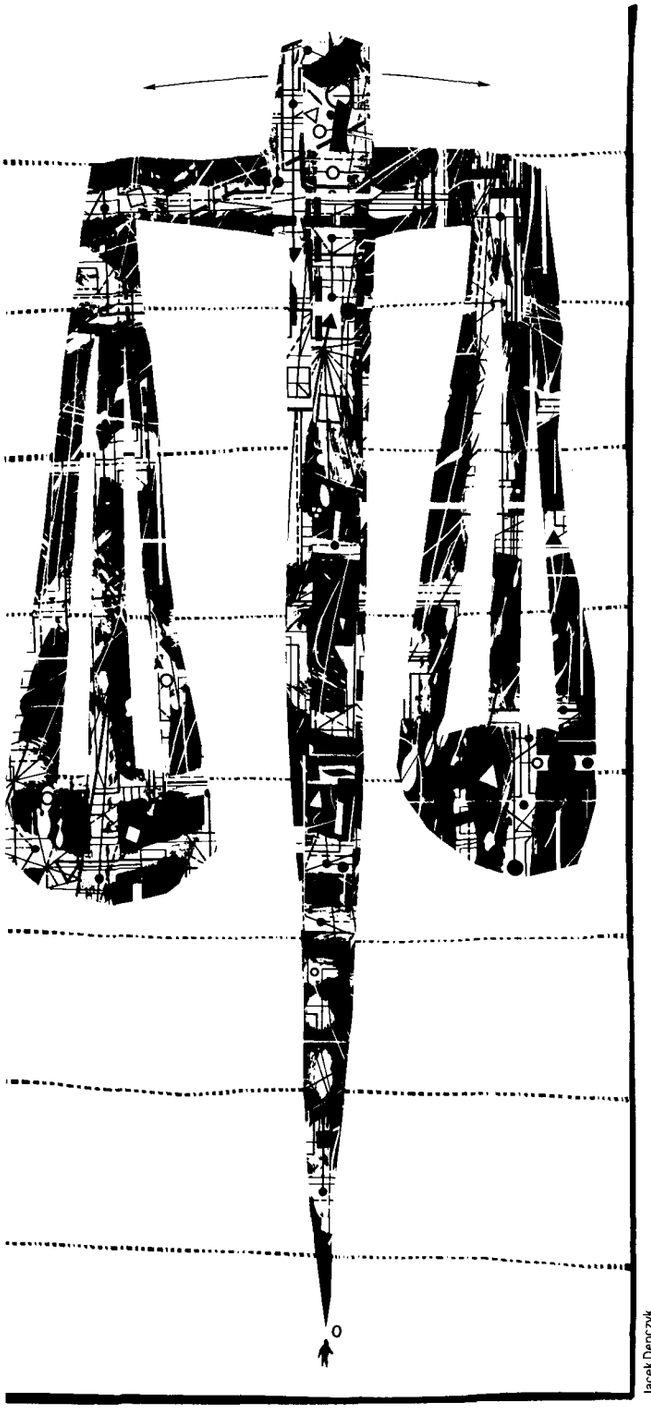
country rather than honour a subpoena in a murder case. Though both the Venezuelan and Costa Rican governments offered to send him back as a parole violator, the Justice Department exhibited no interest in his return.

In June 1976, Bosch's Accion Cubana met in the Dominican Republic with other *émigré* organisations such as Alpha 66. They issued a "war communiqué" saying Cuban civilian airliners would be attacked. Later that year a Cubana airliner, *en route* from Venezuela to Havana, blew up in mid-air shortly after take-off from Barbados; 73 civilians died, including all Cuba's Olympic fencing team.

Venezuela arrested Bosch and three others and charged them with the bombing. Bosch and two others were convicted then subsequently acquitted on appeal, but nonetheless held in prison. The other accused, Luis Posada Carriles, had escaped. In view of the Bush administration's later clemency toward Bosch, we should note that during the Iran-Contra scandal, Posada surfaced in the Ilopango base in El Salvador, working alongside President Bush's old CIA buddy Felix Rodriguez in funnelling arms shipments to the Nicaraguan Contras. Bush was CIA director at the time Bosch and his confrères were hatching terror schemes in the Dominican Republic.

On his release from a Venezuelan prison in 1987, Bosch announced he was ready to "rejoin the struggle" and, regarding the Cubana bombing, that "all of Castro's airplanes are warplanes". In 1988 he was released and returned to the US, where he was arrested as a parole violator. Cuba applied to have him deported to face proceedings, but the application was denied on grounds that Bosch would not get a fair trial. In rejecting Bosch's request for political asylum in January 1989, the acting associate attorney general wrote that "For 30 years Bosch has been resolute and unwavering in his advocacy of terrorist violence." In July, after a campaign by Cuban *émigrés* in Miami in which President Bush's son Jeb expressed his support, Bosch was granted parole.

Joe Doherty was imprisoned on 18 June 1983 for having entered the US illegally. The British government sought his extradition on charges arising from the shooting death of a member of the SAS, the British commando unit. In 1984,



Jacek Depczyk

Doherty, an Irishman, neither charged nor convicted of any offence against US law, began his eighth year in a tiny cell

federal district judge, John Sprizzo, held that Doherty could not be extradited under the then-existing treaty and, addressing himself explicitly to the death of the SAS man, said that "The death of Captain Westmacott, while a most tragic event, occurred in the context of an attempted ambush of a British army patrol. It was the British response to that action that gave rise to Captain Westmacott's death. Had this conduct occurred during the course of more traditional military hostilities there could be little doubt that it would fall within the political offence exception."

Though the history of Joe Doherty's legal battles is long, it is also simple. He has prevailed repeatedly in court battles and in Board of Immigration Appeal hearings. Under US law he merits asylum, and should not be deported to the UK, where he would not have the certainty of a fair trial. The force of this latter point was of course much enhanced last year by the revelations of perversions of justice in the case of the Guildford Four.

Nonetheless, Attorney Generals Edwin Meese and now Richard Thornburgh have repeatedly controverted both federal courts and Board of Immigration Appeals decisions, and ordered Doherty's deportation, thus seeking to circumvent the law on asylum.

On 29 June, a federal appeals court panel granted Doherty the right to apply for asylum, thus handing the Justice Department yet another setback. Though ample sureties have been offered, Doherty's lawyer, Mary Pike, received her copy of the Justice Department's letter to a New York judge urging denial of bail to Doherty on the same day Orlando Bosch was released.

So Doherty can't get bail, even though he manifestly doesn't want to flee, given that he is engaged in legal proceedings in order to remain in the US. Bosch got 10 years for bombing a Polish vessel and for conveying by telegraph threats to the President of Mexico and Prime Minister Harold Wilson. He violated parole and became a fugitive under US law. Despite this, Bosch is released and Doherty held in his cell. The Irishman should hispanicise his name, make more influential friends in Miami and start threatening Fidel Castro.

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Living dangerously

Blow your cover, the IRA tells police informers, and you won't be executed. Malachi O'Doherty reports on the life of a grass

No one honours a dead IRA informer. Patrick Flood was the forgotten victim of the Irish troubles in a week that saw the deaths of Ian Gow, three IRA men, a nun, and a Catholic man gunned down at his front door in west Belfast. Even the out-of-town press stayed away from Paddy Flood's funeral.

Flood was an IRA activist from a well-known Derry republican family. He was shot dead after seven weeks' interrogation in an IRA safe house. He probably knew for most of that period that he hadn't a chance of coming out alive. His wife and close friends knew it too, but they were told not to approach the local clergy for help.

Informers risk their lives every day they work. But they are never seen as heroes. The police never thanked Flood for his work: but then, no one believes he had volunteered his services. He had almost certainly been coaxed into buying his freedom with information.

Gerald and Catherine Mahon, a married couple living on the Lenadoon estate, allowed the RUC to plant a bugging device behind a radiator in their flat, even though the IRA says they stored weapons there. One night in 1985, gunmen took the couple to Turf Lodge, another estate in the shadow of the Black Mountain. In a back alley, they shot Gerald Mahon in the head. His wife made a run for it, but she didn't get far: they caught her and shot her too. They both bled to death on the tarmac.

Sinn Fein president Gerry Adams blamed the Mahons' deaths on the RUC. "By their manipulation of young people," he said, "they have created a situation where someone is going to get killed." This point of view has some surprising allies. When Joseph Fenton of Andersonstown was shot dead last year as an informer, his father issued a statement to the press which read: "Having seen and read evidence which was presented to me, I accept his death and I wish to say that the position in which he was placed due to the pressure brought to bear on him by members of the Special Branch led directly to the death of my son."

He says: 'Listen to what I'm saying and think about it. If you don't we'll torture your ma and da and family'

This week the IRA announced a seven-day amnesty for informers who came forward. But in any case it has long promised informers that they will avoid execution if they blow their cover by declaring in the press what they have been doing. As a result, the Belfast newspapers carry, week by week, confessions by informers who want a way out of their dangerous lifestyle. The number of them is an indication of the huge scale of the problem.

Noel McKay from the Falls Road thinks that the police baited him until they had a charge against him that would give them some leverage over him. He says they pulled him aside for questioning nearly every time he went out. One day he was a bit drunk and a policeman who knew him asked him for his name. In exasperation he gave a false one. That was enough: he was arrested on the spot. On the day he left the courthouse after the first hearing last January, he was approached by a man who introduced himself as "Alan". Alan told McKay that he wanted him to watch certain people and report to him on what they did. "He says: 'Listen to what I'm saying and think about it. See, if you don't we'll torture your ma and da and family.' But my ma and da was dead six years. Obviously he didn't know that."

One day a few weeks ago, when McKay was walking up the Falls Road from the dole office with his little daughter, "Alan" accosted him again. He tried to give him a cigarette packet. "He says to me, like, 'See this fag box? I'm going to leave it on the wall and inside is incriminating evidence.' So I pulled round to go away and he tried to stuff it inside my pocket. I took it out and hit him in the face with it, and dropped it on the ground. He walked off."

But McKay went back and picked up the packet. On one side, written in blue ink with a felt-tip pen, was the message: "NOEL, NICE TO SEE YOU AGAIN, PHONE ME LISBURN 665355." On the other side: "NOEL THANKS. TALK TO ME AGAIN PHONE ME LISBURN 665355." It contained £100 in £10 notes. He took the packet to the Sinn Fein office on the Falls Road.

For Sinn Fein, this was a routine incident. Its press officer, Richard McAuley, describes how he thinks the police work: "First they'll be very general. It's so general people think they can get away with it. Then they get asked about this person or that person, and it's usually people they know or went to school with. You can't lie about not having seen that person because they're watching him too. You can't say that he was somewhere where he wasn't. And gradually you are sucked in. Sometimes they'll make an approach and chat for a while and commit you to nothing—and then there's an important psychological moment: 'Here's a fiver to get you home.' They want you to take the money, because then you've crossed a line."

Some lawyers have been prepared to go public in defence of those who have been faced with police seduction. Solicitor Oliver Kelly claimed in August 1988 that one of his clients, a 29-year-old man from north Belfast, had been sent a letter which, like the message given to Noel McKay on a cigarette packet, had been carefully worded to suggest he was already co-operating with the Branch. According to Kelly: "I think 90 per cent of the people who received this letter would have been terrified by it, unless they were very strong or had

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Mike Abrahams/Network

RUC patrol, Andersonstown, Northern Ireland

received very good advice."

Father Denis Faul, a headmaster at a Catholic school in Dungannon, has helped many informers to blow their cover. Sinn Fein and Father Faul are not the best of friends: Faul was the man who smashed the hunger-strike campaign of the early 1980s when everyone else from the Pope to the British government had failed. But Sinn Fein says that even if an informer or someone under pressure to inform chooses to come into the open by notifying Father Faul, it trusts the IRA to honour that.

But it didn't work for Charlie McIlmurray. McIlmurray was a favourite type of RUC target. He was a taxi driver with a young family. He needed his driving licence to support them, and he tended to get very drunk at times. Whatever way he was hooked, he found it very difficult to wriggle off that hook. He sought out Father Faul. Faul admits he was unwell at the time after a motoring accident and perhaps didn't handle things as well as he could have done. "He told me the police were pressuring him into becoming an informer. He was very frightened and told me not to come to his house. I put a statement in the *Irish News*, but they don't always realise how important these things are, and they didn't print it straight away."

McIlmurray was found shot dead at a filling station on the border. The IRA delivered a letter to his wife. He had written it on the last day of his life, knowing he was to be shot. Richard McAuley of Sinn Fein says he was a friend of McIlmurray's. "I knew him in prison. We had some great crack together, and I felt very sad about this when it happened. But he had been a republican and he should have known better. He should have come to us. I stayed away from the funeral because I didn't want to upset the family. The blame lies with the RUC."

The story of Sandy Lynch also throws doubt on the IRA's good faith in its promise not to harm informers who blow their own cover. Lynch was an informer. His father told him to go to Sinn Fein to clear himself. While he was being debriefed—or interrogated—in a house in Carrigart Avenue in Andersonstown, the RUC burst in. They had suspected that an IRA interrogation house was in the area, since the body of Joseph Fenton, another informer, had been found about 100 yards away. One of the most prominent members of Sinn Fein, Danny Morrison, was arrested nearby, and is now in gaol, awaiting trial for plotting to murder Sandy Lynch.

Some people have resisted the pressure to become informers. Two years ago Stephen Lambert was released from prison after serving four years of a six-year sentence for attempting to murder a member of the UDR. His first meeting with his handler, he says, was when a stranger in Derry shoved a package at him containing £200 and a message for him to go to Aldergrove airport. Sinn Fein trusted him enough to allow him to go. At the airport he was approached by a man who called himself Steve. "Steve" gave him a contact number and another £100.

But at a later meeting with "Steve" in woodland near Limavady, Lambert taped their conversation and later played it back to reporters. On the tape "Steve" said: "We work for the government. We are not restricted by anything like the Branch or the Army or anything like that. You will get a really good service from us. We go to the highest." When reporters questioned the RUC about this they said: "We do not feel obliged to comment on claims made by an organisation which condones and supports murder. The function of the security forces is to protect the community from terrorist organisations."

Henry McNamee was even more adventurous than Stephen Lambert. According to the McNamee family, Henry and the Irish People's Liberation Organisation (a young descendant of the old official IRA) hatched a plan to trap the Special Branch detectives who were trying to handle him. The IPLO allowed two weapons to be captured by the RUC with McNamee's help. This was to encourage them to trust him. But Henry changed his mind. It seems he realised that

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if the plan went ahead he would be the most obvious suspect. He told the IPLO he was pulling out of the operation, and went to live in London.

The IPLO decided he was a fully fledged informer, fleeing to the protection of his handlers. It was suspicious because he had an expensive flat and a car, and travelled to Amsterdam. His family said he shared the flat with others, that the car was cheap, and that he went to Amsterdam for his work. Certainly, McNamee himself behaved as if he had nothing to fear. He came back to Belfast with his girlfriend. He was talking to her in her family home one day when gunmen burst in and shot him dead.

According to press speculation, aided by intelligence sources, informers in Northern Ireland usually get paid up to £5,000 for their help. One anonymous source bemoaned the power of informers to string them along and bleed them dry—as if the informer had the initiative in the relationship with the police.

In fact, it looks as if the days of the big money for informers are over. A few years ago the main RUC strategy was to encourage supergrasses—members of terrorist groups who had been caught and accepted offers of reduced sentences in return for giving evidence against their old friends. Supergrasses were given new identities and helped to start new lives for themselves, undoubtedly at the cost of tens of thousands of pounds.

Garret Fitzgerald, the prime minister of the Irish Republic who signed the Anglo-Irish agreement, believed that the supergrass system had been abolished as a result of the agreement. Sir Barry Shaw, Northern Ireland's Director of Public Prosecutions, has emphatically denied this, but since then there have been no major supergrass trials.

The new informer does not make money. John Holmes of Strabane said he had been paid sums of £10 and £30 for helping the RUC to find Semtex explosives and arrest suspects. Another teenage informer, John Houston, was paid £28 over a year for spying on members of the IRA. Presumably one reason for the low sum was that Houston would have drawn attention to himself if he had been seen flashing big money around. Even to give a young hoodlum enough money to get drunk is to risk his being indiscreet.

The current system of recruiting informers through threats and blackmail makes no appeal to loyalty or principle, and by targeting the most vulnerable it recruits those people who are least able to protect themselves with subterfuge against gunmen who know them as neighbours.

Father Faul's view is that the system also corrupts normal policing: criminals are used rather than punished, and victims of crime often see no result from their complaints to the police. When a crucial element of restoring the Northern Irish conflict is winning faith in the police from the Catholic community, this would seem particularly unfortunate.

If terrorism inevitably debases policing, then debased policing inevitably entangles the broader community in difficult moral choices. What, for instance, should an editor do when his newspaper becomes the forum for informers making public confessions? Those confessions are made to mollify the IRA. There's a death threat over the head of anyone who refuses—so are the Irish papers colluding in intimidation? They are arguably colluding in undermining a security strategy against the IRA, but if they refuse to publish they will be denying informers a lifeline.

The teenage hoodlum augmenting his dole, or keeping himself out of gaol by skulking in doorways at night on the Falls Road, or following his neighbours to the pub with barely the price of a drink in his pocket, perhaps hasn't the inclination to explore the wider socio-ethical issues.

The more experienced IRA activist, like Paddy Flood, at least knows the rules of the game and chooses to play. One of those rules is that the police handlers who trap him and use him will never be called to account for putting his life on the line. ●

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Ourselves alone

Thatcher's Aspen speech showed how isolated Britain is, argues David Walker

Being 2,000 metres high, Aspen, Colorado, is a light-headed kind of place, full of hare-brained think tanks and institutes. Lack of oxygen makes for panoptic visions—of the kind Mrs Thatcher delivered herself last Sunday.

If you missed reports of what had variously been billed as a grand tour of the world horizon and a second edition of her Bruges speech on Europe, it was because the Gulf crisis obtruded. But it was a speech worth noting for several reasons. One is that it surely marks the apogee of coterie philosophising. Here we have a big speech, which on past precedent was written by a courtier, Charles Powell, the Prime Minister's private secretary for overseas affairs, who seeks little input from Whitehall let alone the wider world. Even Richard Nixon, at the height of his isolation, had Henry Kissinger to bounce ideas off, and Powell, in terms of grasp, is no Kissinger.

The other reason is that though the speech was mainly about foreign affairs, it implicitly had as much to say about a pressing domestic concern: how Thatcher can sustain the idea that Britain is great in the run-up to the general election when Britain's economic performance is so obviously poor.

Her answer can be glimpsed in the proposal, presumably for consideration at the Conference on Security and Cooperation Meeting in Paris scheduled for November, for a Magna Charta to guide the new democracies. What Mrs Thatcher is doing is to claim British leadership on a regional and/or a global scale not by virtue of economic fortitude (not easy to argue in the light of the trade and inflation figures) but innate political virtue. It is by dint of the quality of British democracy that Britain leads. Mrs Thatcher portrays Britain in possession of the high ground of democratic principle: the world is simply running to catch up with us.

This was a theme of her Bruges speech, given crude expression in Nicholas Ridley's *Spectator* interview. British democracy, victorious in the battle against Hitler, has a character which Continentals lack. Of course Mrs Thatcher doesn't believe British democracy has yet had no effect. According to government textbooks at least, it spawned New World democracy.

At this point however we come to a fissure within Conservative ranks. On the same day as Thatcher's speech, Peregrine Worsthorne, communing with a still active strain of Tory anti-Americanism, actually used the phrase "splendid isolation", to depict the ideal British position in international affairs. And the same note sounded in the Nicholas Ridley tirade. If Europe is a German racket, what racket should Britain be in? What was missing from his postprandial bile was the United States.

Mrs Thatcher, by contrast, is forever a child of the 1940s, of the United States connection above all. That, in Aspen, was Mrs Thatcher's difficulty. Why should the Americans invest in the special relationship with Britain when the real game is being played in Paris, Brussels and Berlin?

Mrs Thatcher was not able to characterise the nature of the British-American relationship except by reference to a Nato posture which even she sees is anachronistic. Her courtiers of course still hope that the Americans will see how strong and brave we are, and how valuable are our two frigates in the Gulf compared to these pusillanimous, business-is-business Continentals.

The Americans, however, are wiser. There is a gap in the defence of the material interests of the west in places like the Gulf, but the solution—say State Department, Pentagon and Senators—is to upgrade the European Community as a self-defence organisation.

And here we get to the incoherence in the European substance of the Thatcher speech. She wants an international regime that guarantees free trade and rational monetary exchange. But she is unable to define what that regime is, in Europe, other than the European Community, which she cannot influence except by a form of participation—pooled sovereignty—she finds distasteful.

In its place she imagines a loose association, of a kind whose charms have attracted some people on the left, too. It would embrace the Poles, Czechs, Uncle Tom Cobley and all (whose numbers, based on Mrs Thatcher's equation of nationhood and sovereignty, could be legion). But the artificiality of the proposal is demonstrated by her assumption that the Soviets would be excluded from our common European home.

A "loose free-trade association" of course already exists in Europe. Why doesn't Mrs Thatcher come clean and propose Britain's joining (that's to say re-joining) EFTA, the European Free Trade Association? The answer is that EFTA's trade flows are hugely concentrated on the EC, and within the EC with Germany.

For all the talk recently about John Major and Douglas Hurd having coralled Mrs Thatcher's anti-European instincts, the Aspen speech was clearly a statement of her profound opposition to the European Community not as it might be but as it is. For she effectively said no—as a matter of logical inference at least—to Britain's joining the Exchange Rate Mechanism of the European Monetary System. She said no to the consequences of the Single Market in terms of harmonising the conditions of trade and exchange; no to the deepening of the European Community. She also said no to the capacity of the European Community to become an organisation for collective defence: in her vision there is no way Europe ought to send frigates to the Gulf.

So what then is the nature of "racket" which Mrs Thatcher would hitch Britain's star to in 1990s? Here is the empty core of that Aspen "vision". No EC, because the Germans dominate it. No special relationship across the Atlantic to take its place (for the simple reason there is nothing in it for the Americans). No Commonwealth. No EFTA. Splendid isolation indeed. ●

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No rest for the wicked

Iraq's dictator must go on winning to survive, says Fred Halliday. So outside pressure could help to dislodge Saddam

In the aftermath of Iraq's occupation of Kuwait, the Baghdad regime and some of its fellow Arab states are trying to find ways to make the invasion acceptable to the outside world. A new "government" in Kuwait, with its own armed forces, has allegedly taken over from the occupying forces, the Iraqis have made a show of withdrawing, and the country is said to be returning to normal. No doubt some in the Arab world will, in time, accept this new government. There will then be sufficient support for Iraq to make a common Arab front against Baghdad inoperable and to weaken support of the UN Security Council's sanctions.

The Iraqi strategy in Kuwait plays on a variety of factors within the Arab world that might favour acceptance of its action. One is certainly fear of Iraqi military might. Saudi Arabia and Jordan, two monarchies bordering Iraq, feel this with good reason. Another is dislike of traditional monarchies: Arab nationalism, ever since Nasser overthrew King Farouk in Egypt in 1952, has had a strong republican tinge to it, and Libya has welcomed the fall of Kuwait's ruling al-Sabah family as another blow for the anti-monarchical cause. Political calculation must also play a part. Yemen and the PLO are potential beneficiaries of Iraqi military and political support; the former against its intrusive neighbour Saudi Arabia, the latter against Israel.

One further factor explains the degree of Arab support for Iraq. This is the relative lack of concern in the Middle East for what in other contexts would be seen as sovereignty and respect for frontiers. It is not that the frontiers as such are disputed, but rather that the principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of other states is given scant respect.

Iraq is by no means the only state to proceed in this way. Almost all states in the Middle East have, to a greater or lesser degree, acted in this manner—backing opposition forces within each other's states, broadcasting radio programmes denouncing the governments in power, arming and financing dissidents. Nor is Iraq's invasion the first such attempt to use armed force. Kuwait has been invaded before: in 1921, when Saudi Arabian forces marched to the gates of Kuwait City and annexed two thirds of the country's territory. Syria tried to invade Jordan in 1970 and has had troops in Lebanon ever since 1976. The two Yemens, before they united, had both tried in the 1970s to invade each other. This culture of intervention is not, by any means, confined to the Arabs. Both Israel and Iran have practised it on others, as much as their enemies have on them.

It was on this basis that Saddam Hussein took his gamble. He knew the Kuwaiti armed forces would offer little resistance. He calculated that the US and other outside powers would not act to protect Kuwait, not least because the occupation itself would take only a few hours. He played a classic game of bluff, threat, charm and brutality, and in so doing disoriented his opponents in the Middle East and beyond. Their core miscalculation was that in today's peaceful international climate, he simply would not dare to do it. But this mistake arose not only from a misjudgment of the situation just prior to the invasion on 2 August, but also from a misreading of Iraq's overall strategy in recent years.

The Iraqi regime, in power since 1968, is controlled by the Arab Ba'ath Socialist Party, a militant nationalist group that rules through the party, the army and the secret police, and which Saddam has built up as the core of the state. Ba'athist ideology is a contemporary Arab variant of the European Fascism of the 1930s. Like its German and Italian variants, it borrows some ideas and organisational principles from socialism but is militantly right-wing in content; it is racist in its attitude to non-Arabs, particularly those like Kurds, Iranians and Jews, who live in the Middle East; it rests on the cult of cruelty and of the leader; and it embodies a drive for military conquest.

As in Nazi Germany, the policies of the regime owe much to the particular character of the leader. Saddam's personality and ideology involve an inchoate but powerful mix of demagogy, lies, threat and mysticism. They need foreign military adventures to survive. It was this drive to expansion that led Saddam to invade Iran in 1980. His aggression almost ended in defeat, but in the end he was able to outlast the Iranian counter-attack and get a favourable peace in 1988. The attack on Kuwait is, in part, a reaction to the failure to force a capitulationist peace on Tehran. Faced with the need to make peace with Iran, he has turned instead to the weakest target he can find and has moved decisively to absorb it.

If Saddam succeeds, he will end up with control of great economic assets: at least 20 per cent of OPEC production and a much larger percentage of world oil reserves. By the end of this decade world oil output was, in any case, going to rest in the hands of four Gulf states, two of them Iraq and Kuwait. Saddam's acquisition would give him a special dominance in that market, with all the strategic and economic consequences that follow. These latter considerations explain more than anything what the Iraqi regime wants—not just economic wealth, but strategic domination of the Middle East, with the ability to impose the kind of cruel dictatorship already found in Iraq upon other peoples of the region.

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Here lies the particular danger of the Iraqi action. Iraq is hardly the first country in the postwar world to get away with invasion and in so doing to violate international law: the USSR did it in Czechoslovakia and Hungary, and the US has done it on several occasions, most recently in Panama. A point not much heard as the condemnation of Iraq has welled up is that the US invasion of Panama and Iraq's of Kuwait are equal acts of illegality. However, assessing acts of invasion has another dimension, namely the kind of regime established in the country concerned.

Some cases of intervention are defensible in humanitarian terms. Such, *par excellence*, was the Indian invasion of East Bengal in 1971, which led to the independence of Bangladesh from Pakistan. Some have argued the same of the Vietnamese invasion of Cambodia in 1979; others of the US invasions of Grenada and Panama. The point is whether invasion enhances the freedom of the country invaded, and whether the invading power then consolidates its position. Illegality apart, the terrible import of the Iraqi invasion is that it constitutes a political disaster for Kuwait itself.

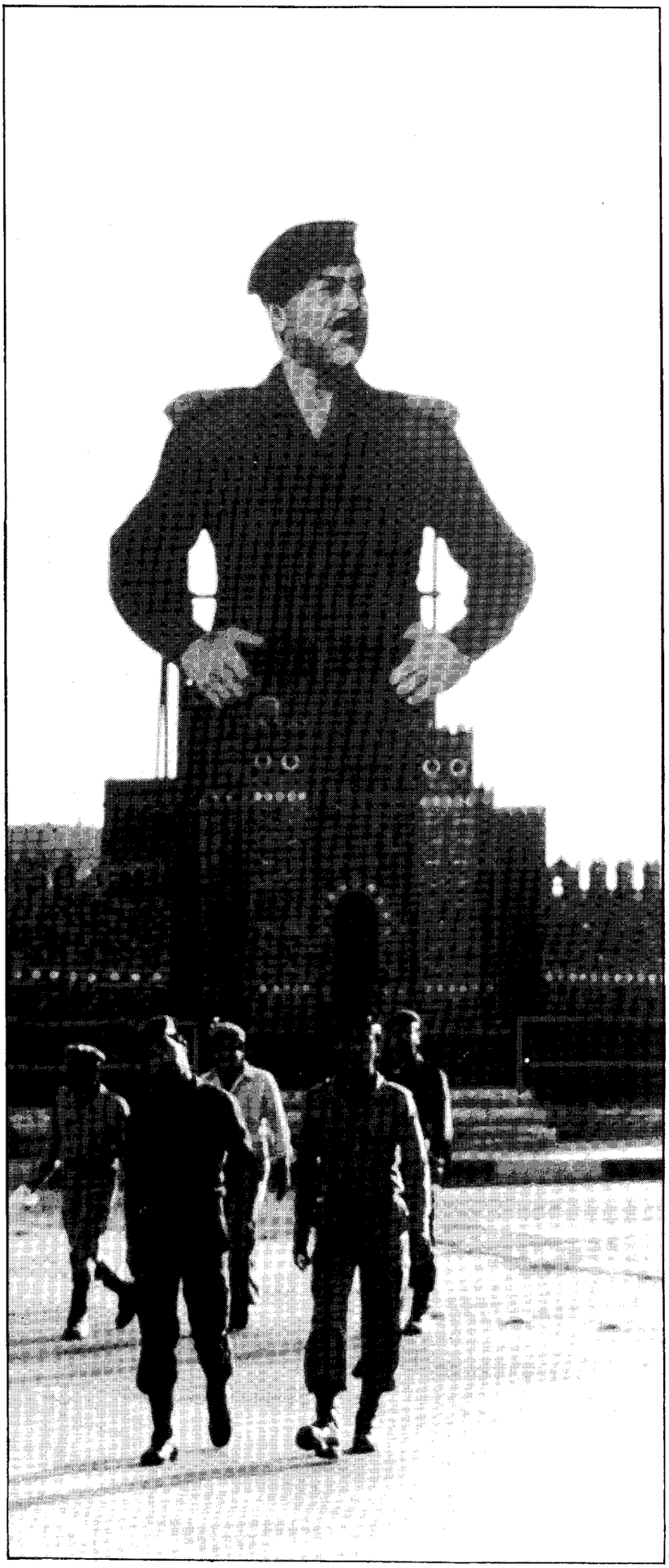
The ruling al-Sabah family were foes of democracy: the suffrage was limited to a caste of Kuwaiti males, and even that power had been inoperative for a decade or more. But Kuwait was not a country where arbitrary terror, murder and torture reigned, as they do in Iraq. There was a degree of freedom of expression and assembly that the opposition, both Islamic and Arab nationalist, was working to enlarge. The overwhelming preference of the majority of Kuwaitis was to live with, and struggle against, their own ruling family rather than have an Iraqi tyranny imposed on them.

The lesson of defeat for dictators is clear. In the long run, they lose more than their shirts

No one can yet predict whether Saddam's gamble will come off and what the consequences will be. One positive outcome of the crisis may well be that, faced with hostility from the west, Iraq improves its relations with Iran and settles on the compromise peace that it has refused to sign since the war ended in 1988. Iran has been quick to seize the opportunity of Iraqi aggression to promote its case in the west by offering to reopen relations with Britain. The invasion will almost certainly hasten the release of western hostages held in Lebanon, and may encourage a broad reduction of tension in that area as Syria, fearful of new Iraqi might, goes further towards a settlement with Israel.

If the outside world is able to block the oil exports of Iraq and Kuwait then both countries will grind to a halt in a matter of months, with widespread suffering. If Saudi Arabia and Turkey allow Iraqi oil to continue to flow out by pipeline, it would still be possible to block it by military strikes targeted at pumping and storage stations within Iraq and Kuwait themselves. Therefore there is a real prospect that, despite his quick victory, Saddam may have overreached himself in Kuwait. If he cannot hold on to his gains, then the risks of a challenge from within the Iraqi army will rise considerably.

From Portugal and Greece in 1974, to Argentina in 1982, the lesson of defeat for military dictators is clear enough. For a short time they may well wave the flags; in the long run, they will lose more than their shirts. Whether or not this happens to Iraq's abominable ruler depends, more than anything, on the ability of the outside world to take concerted and determined action against him. If that does occur then no amount of hoax withdrawals or equivocation by Arab states will save him.



Frank Spooner Pictures

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LETTERS

Figaro and the desperados

I write in response to the critique by Ken Smith on the performance of the *Marriage of Figaro*, and on the inmates, the officers, and HMPs Wormwood Scrubs and Strangeways ("Figaro in nick", 20 July).

While I agree with some of what Mr Smith wrote—how enchanted the audience were by the brilliant performance of the Pimlico Opera and Orchestra—I do feel that he has relied rather a bit too much on his fading and outdated recollections from when he was here at the Scrubs, and taxed poetic licence to the hilt—even for a humorous article. As a D-wing resident who attended the opera I should like to correct just a few of the many misconceptions Mr Smith is living under and may have passed on to your readers.

Nobody was screened out from attending. If the "heavies" or "desperados" wanted to attend, then attend they did. Also he mentions the 43s: quite right they did not attend the opera, but to say that they do not attend church is quite mischievously erroneous. There are three services a week in the C of E chapel which are attended by *all* who wish to go. They can also attend the CEMS meetings in the chapel, held on Thursday evenings and where members of the public mix with us and are entertained by visiting groups, videos and so on.

Why does he find it necessary to keep drawing parallels with Strangeways; this I found galling and feel that the record really does need to be put straight. Though the events at Strangeways were followed with interest, which surely is normal, life went on much as usual: CEMS, chapel, gym, evening association, education, work, inter-wing and D Wing v Officers football matches all went ahead as planned while Strangeways was being flattened.

So I am a bored institutionalised expert in dissimulation with a savage breast, a headful of Mozart and an insatiable craving for a glimpse of the opposite gender am I? Good job I was on my best behaviour, eh, what, Mr Smith? Were you there that evening, Ken? Or was your article written in the pub down the road?

Fact: the evening had been looked forward to with eager anticipation and the vibes as we filled the chapel were of genuine *bonhomie*, much the same as you would find with any audience, anywhere. What did you

expect or, more to the point, what did you hope would happen Mr Smith? I do think your readers should know that we are not all like Bill Sykes or his dog.

On the whole I found this to be an uninformed, scurrilous write-up on our evening of opera, and would like to suggest that you ask Mr Ken Smith to donate his fee for the witterings that are the subject of this letter to the Wormwood Scrubs Charity, who do such excellent work.

M Woozley
Resident D Wing, The Chef (Staff Mess), Editor Worms Eye *(in-house mag), Crucifer (C of E Chapel), Student (Computer Studies), Student (OU Course), and not bored.*

Arts sponsorship

Your editorial on arts sponsorship ("Duff notes", 20 July) was a trifle misleading.

The idea that arts sponsorship's "wild fluctuations" make planning impossible seems a strange statement to add on to the idea that sponsorship is only an insignificant fraction of the cultural budget.

In any case, where are the other, unfluctuating, forms of cultural support? As a number of arts organisations know (Kent Opera springs to mind), public funding also has a capacity for infidelity. It is not for sponsorship, in any case, to do the job of sustaining the arts that public funding is there to do. As ABSA's business members have always pointed out, sponsorship must be a supplement to, not a substitute for, public funding.

On the economic downturn point, I'm sure *NSS* would not wish the UK blindly to follow a US model? Our arts sponsorship is of a very different nature to the US's, which comes much more from corporate philanthropy budgets. While those may be vulnerable to economic downturn, the seventies experience of recession in the UK showed that it was the companies which sustained their marketing, and public relations budgets (the source of much British arts sponsorship) which pulled through.

Caroline Kay
Head of External Affairs
Association for Business Sponsorship of the Arts
London SE1

Serious suffering

What is most disheartening to a psychiatrist about Stuart Cosgrove's article "Erotomania" (27 July) is not his disregard for contemporary psychological thinking on this subject, but his failure to take what is a disabling clinical condition seriously.

To emphasise only one aspect of his incomprehension of the nature of this medical illness, there is a huge difference between simple infatuation or preoccupation with a public figure no matter what extraordinary behaviour this leads to, and Erotomania. To conflate the two is to trivialise a serious psychiatric disorder. In Erotomania the patient's usual way of thinking is often disturbed at a fundamental level such that they begin to believe, in the absence of any reasonable evidence, that a public figure is in love with them, and frequently only after this delusion has taken grip do they themselves return this affection. The delusion is not uncommon in the context of other symptoms of major mental illness, such as auditory hallucinations and believing one's body to be controlled by external forces.

Only a small minority of the cases quoted by Mr Cosgrove possess any of the features of Erotomania. Even the Hinkley case that he mentioned, which is closest to the real syndrome of all those he listed, is far from definitely a case of Erotomania.

Should Mr Cosgrove or the *NSS* seek to venture again into the world of psychological phenomena, particularly those leading to suffering, the academic and clinical community of psychologists and psychiatrists would be much relieved if some attention was paid to the research activity in this area and—even more importantly—the feelings of psychiatric patients.

Dr Rajendra D Persaud
Institute of Psychiatry
London SE5

Health and safety

David Bergman's article "A killing in the boardroom" (15 June) says things with which I can agree; but his account of the Health and Safety Executive's approach to enforcement is incomplete, and his quotations from our literature highly selective.

Our 1988/89 annual report does, as he says, state that inspectors are there to promote compliance with reasonable standards. But he might also have quoted (from my own foreword), for example: "we shall continue to press for very significant penalties... and... we shall have no hesitation in pressing magistrates to remit (cases) to the higher courts or—where appropriate—to submit papers to the Director of Public Prosecutions." As also: "I have made clear the Executive's preparedness to proceed against the directors of companies and also against individual supervisors or workers if this seems justified by the facts."

So much for our attitudes. As for the record, we took formal enforcement action on no fewer than 11,483 occasions in the year in question, either to prosecute (1 occasion in 5) or to use our powers to insist on specific improvements, or simply to shut down a process or business until it was made safe. Thus, only recently, work at the Channel Tunnel in both marine running tunnels was prohibited until safety improvements had been made on the tunnel boring machines. Such action can be far more salutary and certainly more expensive than being taken to court. For Mr Bergman to be suggesting that the HSE lacks the will to enforce health and safety legislation gives highly misleading comfort to employers.

The powers of an HSE inspector are impressive, but it is true they are not omnipotent. They cannot bring manslaughter charges; they do assist coroner's courts, but they cannot decide who is called to give evidence there. They receive thorough training in all the aspects of criminal law which they need for their work, including guidance on when to refer a

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case to the police. Police attendance at a death is not "merely a formality". The police make their own investigation, and discussions between the HSE inspector and the police or the Crown Prosecution Service will take place if the most appropriate charge is one not available to an HSE inspector. In these circumstances, as in the Holt case, the HSE's investigation will usually provide the basis of the evidence used at the trial.

Finally, Mr Bergman joins those demanding the prosecution and imprisonment of individuals. The HSE conducted 36 such cases in 1988/89. However, it is often very difficult to establish to the satisfaction of the courts that a particular individual's actions, or omissions, were the significant factor in an accident. Mr Bergman mentions the offence of corporate manslaughter, but this offence has yet to be established in law. If it is established the HSE will certainly be co-operating with the Director of Public Prosecutions in future cases.

J D Rimington
Director General HSE
London W2

Janice Galloway

The story "Blood" (*NSS*, 3 August) is the title story of her collection to be published by Secker & Warburg in March 1991.

THIS ENGLAND

£5 book tokens for entries printed. (Postcards please)

● Plans are also under way for a plaque on a wall at an east London petrol station where the Rolling Stones once urinated after they were refused permission to use the toilets.—*Guardian (P Butler)*

● I notice a sad and disturbing change in the newly published eighth edition of the *Concise Oxford Dictionary*. Until now each edition has included this entry:

"WING: One of the limbs or organs by which the flight of a bird, bat, insect, angel etc is effected."

The word "angel" has been dropped from the new edition. —*Sunday Telegraph* (George Moor)

● Taunton Crown Court heard that the meat, some of which was from animals infected with fever when they were alive, would normally have been sent on to schools and hotels or been canned.—*Western Morning News* (A Kirkby)

FRINGE BENEFITS

Great Dane

Colin Ward

In the mid-1970s I was walking at 6pm down the grand Nash staircase at 17 Carlton House Terrace (paradoxically the home of various non-affluent unofficial bodies like the Town and Country Planning Association and the Civic Trust), when a tiny, crop-headed old man came leaping up the stairs. "Please tell me," he said, "is Mr Colin Ward still here?"

So I took him to the nearest pub, the Coach and Horses, and, as he sipped his tonic water, I learned that he was Steen Eiler Rasmussen. He didn't know, of course, that I had revered him for years just because in 1934 in Denmark, he had written the best-ever book about London. It came from Jonathan Cape in 1937, was a Penguin in the 1960s and is around at the moment, if you know the right bookshops, in a new reprint from MIT Press. The architect Peter Shepheard was nudging me the other day to urge that it was the best book ever written about any city in the world. But there is something to be said for Norma Evenson on Paris, Alan Moorehead on Calcutta or Reyner Banham on Los Angeles.

The only reason why Rasmussen wanted to talk to me (he didn't need to, it was just his automatic politeness) was because I had written for permission to quote his account, in his book *Experiencing Architecture* (MIT Press 1964), of the way children *use* the environment. He explained how, in the morning break at 11am, the boys from a nearby school learned the physical nature of the curved walls of S. Maria Maggiore in Rome. As Rasmussen saw it, they projected their nerves, their senses, into the seemingly lifeless wall:

"It was apparently a kind of football but they also utilised the wall in their game—as in squash a curved wall—which they played against with great virtuosity. When the ball was *out*, it was most decidedly out, bouncing down all the steps and rolling several hundred feet further on with an eager boy rushing after it, in and out among motor cars and Vespas down near the great obelisk. I do not claim that these Italian youngsters learned more about architecture than the tourist did. But, quite unconsciously, they experienced certain basic elements of architecture: the horizontal planes and the vertical walls above the slopes. And they learned to play on those elements. As I sat in the shade watching them, I sensed the whole three-dimensional composition as never before. At a quarter past eleven the boys dashed off, shouting and laughing."

Rasmussen died last month, aged 92, and his British admirers have been swapping fond recollections. Peter Shepheard, for example, told me how when they were both visiting professors in America the Rasmussens made a trip to Berkeley, California. At 3am Karen woke her husband to say, "Steen Eiler, there's an empty parking space outside." The old gent replied, "Right. You get the car and I'll stand there and pretend to be a fire hydrant."

He had grasped, as only a few others, like Claes Oldenburg or Richard Dattner, had, the significance of the hydrant as a kind of icon of American street life. He also learned, as I have, that if you're an elderly male not very well dressed in old-fashioned clothes, you can go just about anywhere in American cities. Rasmussen poked his nose in everywhere.

But nowhere better than in *London: the unique city*. His old photographs of streets and squares, council houses, Underground stations and Hampstead Heath now have a kind of melancholy antique charm, but his magnificent text endlessly evokes the city that London ought to be. Writing of the atmosphere of Bloomsbury he notes how "on a summer day when the sun is shining you can walk for hours from one square to another under fresh green trees and see thousands of little circular spots cast by the sun on the green lawns."

He celebrates a green city on a domestic scale, with superlative public transport and aspirations to garden city dispersal. "London is to us Continental people the successor of the self-governing townships of the Middle Ages. London is the capital of all capitals which has resisted absolutism and maintained the rights of the citizens within the state."

Back in the 1930s, his last chapter was called "A Most Unhappy Ending" because he, correctly, saw the housing authorities in London copying the worst, not the best, of European practice in replacing slums by multistorey tenements. Rasmussen noticed everything: balconies in Park Lane, paddling pools in Tooting, the backs of houses in Pimlico, coal-hole covers, the lettering that Edward Johnston designed for the Underground in 1916, the passion for growing things.

It always needs someone who is not a native of the place to grasp what anywhere should aspire to become. Rasmussen, with an immense perception of London's past, disclosed the kind of city it could have been.

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A Find

Rod Judkins

Nadine Gordimer was born and lives in South Africa. She has published nine novels and seven collections of short stories to date. Her first collection of non-fiction—"The Essential Gesture"—was published in 1988. Among many literary awards she won the Booker Prize for "The Conservationist". Bloomsbury Publishing will publish her new novel, "My Son's Story", on 9 September.

To hell with them.

A man who had bad luck with women decided to live alone for a while. He was twice married for love. He cleared the house of whatever his devoted second wife had somehow missed out when she left with the favourite possessions they had collected together—paintings, rare glass, even the best wines lifted from the cellar. He threw away books on whose fly-leaf the first wife had lovingly written her new name as a bride. Then he went on holiday without taking some woman along. For the first time he could remember; but those tarts and tramps with whom he had believed himself to be in love had turned out unfaithful as the honest wives who had vowed to

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Rod Judkins

cherish him forever.

He went alone to a resort where the rocks flung up the sea in ragged fans, the tide sizzled and sucked in the pools. There was no sand. On stones like boiled sweets, striped and flecked and veined, people—women—lay on salt-faded mattresses and caressed themselves with scented oils. Their hair was piled up and caught in elastic garlands of artificial flowers, that year, or dripped—as they came out of the water with crystal beads studding glossy limbs—from gilt clasps that flashed back and forth to the hoops looped in their ears. Their breasts were bared, that year. They wore inverted triangles of luminescent cloth over the pubis, secured by a string that went up through the divide of the buttocks to meet two strings coming round from over the belly and hip-bones. In his line of vision, as they walked away down to the sea they appeared totally naked; when they came up out of the sea, gasping with pleasure, coming towards his line of vision, their breasts danced, drooped as the women bent, laughing, for towels and combs and the anointing oil. The bodies of some were patterned like tie-dyed fabric: strips and patches white or red where garments had covered bits of them from the fiery immersion of sun. The nipples of others were raw as strawberries, it could be observed that they could scarcely bear to touch them with balm. There were men, but he didn't see men. When he closed his eyes and listened to the sea he could smell the women—the oil.

He swam a great deal. Far out in the calm bay between wind-surfers crucified against their gaudy sails, closer in shore where the surf trampled his head under hordes of white water. A shoal of young mothers carried their infants about in the shallows. Denting its softness, naked against their mothers' flesh the children clung, so lately separated from it that they still seemed part of those female bodies in which they had been planted by males like himself. He lay on the stones to dry. He liked the hard nudging of the stones, fidgeting till he adjusted his bones to them, wriggling them into depressions until his contours were contained rather than resisted. He slept. He woke to see their shaven legs passing his head—women. Drops shaken from their wet hair fell on his warm shoulders. Sometimes he found himself swimming underwater beneath them, his tough-skinned body grazing past like a shark.

As men do at the shore when they are alone,

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he flung stones at the sea, remembering —regaining—the art of making them skim and skip across the water. Lying face-down out of reach of the last rills, he sifted handfuls of sea-polished stones and, close up, began to see them as adults cease to see: the way a child will look and look at a flower, a leaf—a stone, following its alluvial stripes, its fragments of mysterious colour, its buried sprinklings of mica, feeling (he did) its egg- or lozenge-shape smoothed by the sea's oiled caressing hand.

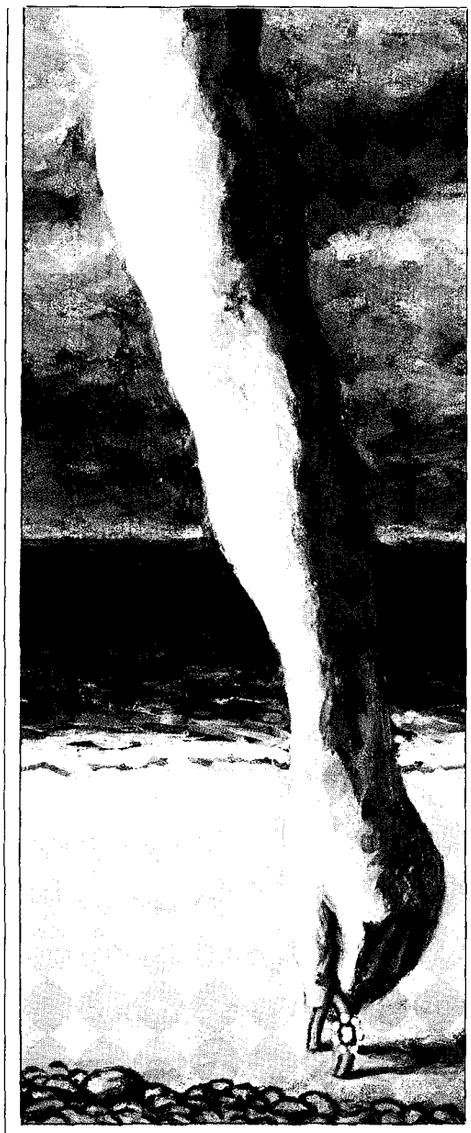
Not all the stones were really stones. There were flattish amber ovals the gem-cutter ocean had buffed out of broken beer bottles. There were cabochons of blue and green glass (some other drowned bottle) that could have passed for aquamarines and emeralds. Children collected them in hats or buckets. And one afternoon among these treasures mixed with bits of styrofoam discarded from cargo ships and other plastic jetsam that is cast, refloated and cast again, on shores all round the world, he found in the stones with which he was occupying his hand like a monk telling his beads, a real treasure. Among the pebbles of coloured glass was a diamond and sapphire ring. It was not on the surface of the stony beach, so evidently had not been dropped there that day by one of the women. Some darling, some rich man's treasure (or ensconced wife), diving off a yacht, out there, wearing her jewels while she fashionably jettisoned other covering, must have felt one of the rings slipped from her finger by the water. Or didn't feel it, noticed the loss only when back on deck, rushed to find the insurance policy, while the sea drew the ring deeper and deeper down; and then, tiring of it over days, years, slowly pushed and washed it up to dump on land. It was a beautiful ring. The sapphire a large oblong surrounded by round diamonds with a baguette-cut diamond set horizontally on either side of this brilliant mound, bridging it to an engraved circle.

Although it had been dug up from a good six inches down by his random fingering, he looked around as if the owner were sure to be standing over him.

But they were oiling themselves, they were towelling their infants, they were plucking their eyebrows in the reflection of tiny mirrors, they were sitting cross-legged with their breasts lolling above the squat tables where the waiter from the restaurant had placed their salads and bottles of white wine. He took the ring up to the restaurant; perhaps someone had reported a loss. The patronne drew back. She might have been being offered stolen goods by a fence. It's valuable. Take it to the police.

Suspicion arouses alertness; perhaps, in this foreign place, there was some cause to be suspicious. Even of the police. If no-one claimed the ring, some local would pocket it. So what was the difference—he put it into his own pocket, or rather into the shoulder-bag that held his money, his credit cards, his car keys and sunglasses. And he went back to the beach and lay down again, on the stones, among the women. To think.

He put an advertisement in the local paper. *Ring found on Blue Horizon Beach, Tuesday 1st,* and the telephone and room number at his hotel. The patronne was right; there were many calls. A few from men, claiming their wives, mothers, girl-friends had, indeed, lost a ring on that beach. When he asked them to describe the ring, they took a chance: a diamond ring. But they could only prevaricate when pressed for more details. If a woman's voice was the wheedling, ingratiating one (even weepy, some of them) recognisable as that of some middle-aged con-woman, he cut off the call the moment she tried to describe her lost ring. But if the voice was attractive and sometimes clearly young, soft, even hesitant in its lying boldness, he asked the owner to come to his hotel to identify the ring.



On stones like boiled sweets, people—women—lay and caressed themselves with oils

Describe it.

He seated them comfortably before his open balcony, with the light from the sea interrogating their faces. Only one convinced him she really had lost a ring; she described it in detail and went away, sorry to have troubled him. Others—some quite charming or even extremely pretty, dressed to seduce—would have settled for something else to come of the visit, if they could not get away with their invented descriptions of a ring. They seemed to calculate that a ring is a ring; if it's valuable, it must have diamonds, and one or two were ingenious enough to say, yes, there were other precious stones with it, but it was an heirloom (grandmother, aunt) and they didn't really know the names of the stones.

But the colour? The shape?

They left as if affronted; or they giggled guiltily, they'd come just for a dare, a bit of fun. And they were quite difficult to get rid of politely.

Then there was one with a voice unlike that of any of the other callers, the controlled voice of a singer or actress, maybe, expressing diffidence. I have given up hope. Of finding it...my ring. She had seen the advertisement and thought, no, no, it's no use. But if there were a million to one chance... He asked her to come to the hotel.

She was certainly forty, a born beauty with great, still, grey-green eyes and no help needed except to keep her hair peacock-black. It grew from a peak like a beak high on her round forehead and fell shinily to her shoulders. There was no sign of a fold where her breasts met, firmly spaced in the neck of a dress black as her hair. Her hands were made for rings; she spread long thumbs and fingers, turned palms up: And then it was gone, I saw a gleam a moment in the water—

Describe it.

She gazed straight at him, turned her head to direct those eyes away, and began to speak. Very elaborate, she said, platinum and gold...you know, it's difficult to be precise about an object you've worn so long you don't notice it any more. A large diamond...several. And emeralds, and red stones...rubies, but I think they had fallen out before...

He went to the drawer in the hotel desk-cum-dressing-table and from under folders describing restaurants, cable TV programmes and room service available, he took an envelope. Here's your ring, he said.

Her eyes did not change. He held it out to her.

Her hand wafted slowly towards him as if under water. She took the ring from him and began to put it on the second finger of her left hand. It would not fit but she corrected the movement with swift conjuring and it slid home over the third finger.

He took her out to dinner and the subject was not referred to. Ever again. She became his third wife. They live together with no more unsaid, between them, than any other couple.

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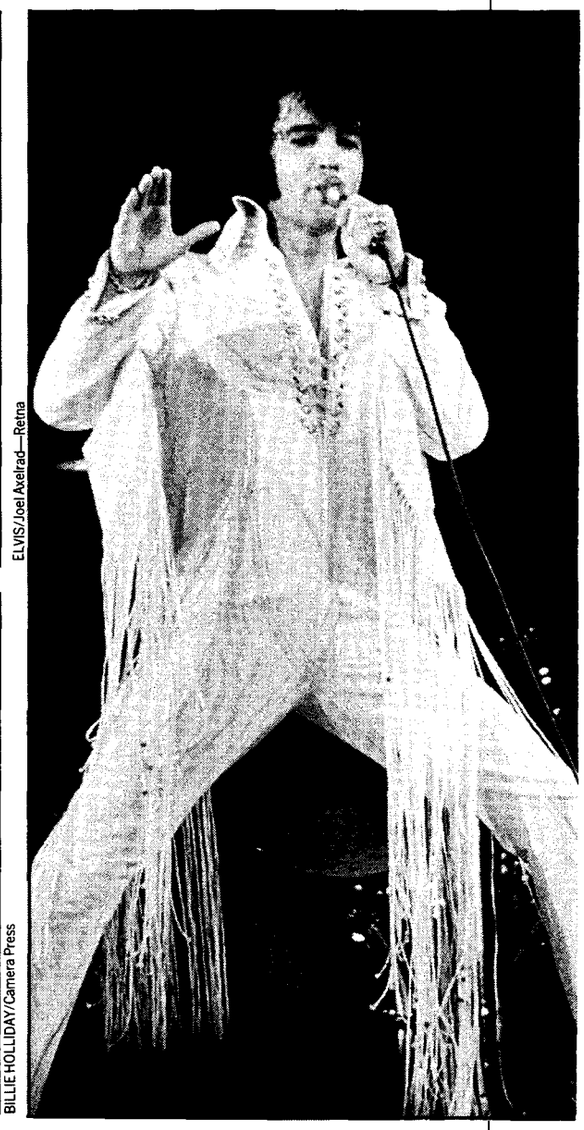
JUDAS PRIEST/Ross Marino—Retna



ELVIS/Joel Axelrad—Retna

CHUCK BERRY/Barry Morgenstein—Retna

BILLIE HOLLIDAY/Camera Press

Banned in the USA

While the Judas Priest controversy rages in the US, cases of obscenity brought against musicians are mounting. Malu Halasa reports

On display at the Record Town in the Four Seasons shopping mall in Greensboro, North Carolina, is "Stained Class", the album by the British heavy metal group Judas Priest, which allegedly caused the suicide of two Nevada teenagers after they heard a subliminal message in the music. 2 Live Crew's "Banned in the USA" is also on the shelves. Missing, of course, is the rap group's "As Nasty As They Wanna Be" album, which was declared legally obscene in Florida.

"Kids come up to me and ask if it's the cleaned-up version or the dirty," drawls store employee 24-year-old Matt Picard, picking up "Banned", a stylish 12-inch take-off of Bruce Springsteen's "Born in the USA". "They're disappointed when I say it's the clean one. Stickering [the use of stickers alerting buyers of explicit lyrics on records] may be good for the parents, but it will also tell kids which 'dirty' records to buy."

Public concern about obscenity in music and subliminal corruption of the young harks back to the days of rock 'n' roll when Elvis was lewd and Chuck Berry an incitement to riot. Nearly 40 years later, America's conservatives have not changed their tune about the dangers of contemporary music.

The June obscenity decision against 2 Live Crew sent a ripple through conservative America. A Florida record-store owner was arrested and fined, as were the rappers after performing in an adult-only, late-night club. In South Carolina, Virginia and Texas, record stores have been threatened with prosecution for keeping "Nasty" on the shelves.

North Carolina is more progressive than other southern states. But in Mississippi, the religious right is on the rise. Reverend Allen Wildmon's American Family Association distributed the lyric sheet for 2 Live Crew, alerting Christian anti-pornography lawyer Jack Thomp-

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son of Miami, who then successfully targeted the rappers. Organisations like these—welcomed by North Carolina Republican Senator Jesse Helms, the man behind the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) controversy (see *NSS*, 20 July)—are forming a vocal conservative coalition which is spearheaded in music by the Parents' Music Resource Centre, a "concerned" action group run by government wives: Tipper Gore is married to a Democratic liberal senator from Tennessee, and Susan Baker is the wife of US Secretary of State James Baker.

Since it was founded in 1985 with money from Beach Boy Mike Love's foundation, the PMRC has been actively involved in government legislation affecting the music industry. According to Reebee Garofalo, of the International Organisation for the Study of Popular Music, "It formed at a time when these women had very influential husbands who could bring the music industry to its knees. They controlled the sub-committees that were dealing with the home tapping bill, which would have added—if passed—millions of dollars to record company coffers."

The PMRC came up with the novel idea of rating LPs like movies, "X" for explicit lyrics, "D/A" for drug and alcohol-oriented and "O" for occult. Under this system, there would be more stickers than sleeve on the Judas Priest album.

The Judas Priest case appears to have skirted the First Amendment issue altogether. The parents of the two dead teenagers are suing the band and CBS records on the charge of product liability, a kind of manufacturers' guarantee for faulty merchandise. The parents want reimbursement for the life potential of their sons in unearned paycheques, and so on.

But the central issue remains that of freedom of expression. The judge's ruling that while words are protected under the American constitution, a voice played backwards may not be, has set a potentially dangerous precedent.

"American law recognises a very narrow category of speech that can be prosecuted," says *Rolling Stone* lawyer Laura Handman. "It's called incitement when you directly urge people to criminal acts, and it is under that law that the subliminal message comes in. It would be most unusual to apply this to artistic expression, which is more descriptive and subtle."

Subtlety is not the problem with the censored rap lyrics of 2 Live Crew. Take "Dick Almighty" from "Nasty". "It will fuck all the bitches all shapes and sizes/She climb the mountain, even run the block/Just to kiss the head of this big black cock."

From the blues to blaxploitation films, sexual boasting has always been part of a black cultural tradition. In *The Signifying Monkey*, Henry Louis Gates, Jr, wrote: "In the face of racist stereotypes about black sexuality you can do one of two things: You can disavow them or explode them with exaggeration."

Rapper Ice T applies this theory to the street. "The way to hold the attention of a bunch of guys is not to say rap is about politics but to talk about a girl with big titties."

Obscenity is not the only issue here. Luther Campbell, 2 Live rapper and independent record company owner knew anti-pornography lawyer Thompson when he ran for Dade County State Attorney in 1988. He lost against incumbent candidate Janet Reno who Campbell endorsed with a song. Thompson is currently writing a book on how to wage a one-man obscenity campaign.

The increased number of obscenity cases affecting arts and music as well as "straight" pornography is a direct result of the intensification of US obscenity laws that began under Reagan. A recent Supreme Court ruling making the possession of child pornography a crime allows for random search and seizure—of businesses as well as individuals. And museums and libraries which fail to keep strict records of their nudes and prove they are of consenting adults face a ten-year sentence and $100,000 fine.

But the farthest-reaching effect of the new laws has been in the current NEA controversy. Mainstream arts groups like Shakespeare In The Park have lost government grants for not signing the NEA loyalty oath on obscenity restrictions, which includes a ban on homoerotic subject-matter.

'The way to hold the attention of a bunch of guys is not to say rap is about politics, but to talk about a girl with big titties'

Now the Federal Communications Commission is reconsidering a resolution originally put forward by Senator Helm to extend the daytime ban on broadcasting offensive material to 24 hours—forget about hearing Richard Pryor, let alone 2 Live Crew on American radio.

Historically, African-American musicians have guaranteed their autonomy by working with independent labels, whether white- or black-owned. In 1939, Billie Holliday's legendary song about lynching, "Strange Fruit", was released not by Columbia, her major record company, but by the small jazz label, Commodore. In the sixties, no other company but Motown would have put out the Supremes' "Love Child" about teenage pregnancy.

With the advent of MTV, Stetsasonics' rapper Daddy-O believes suburban, teenage America is adopting a black agenda.

"Middle America begins to get frightened because rap shakes them. Now their kids wear Adidas and have stopped talking about eating blood and sacrificing animals and they are saying 'Fuck The Police' [by Niggers with Attitude] or 'Me So Horny' [2 Live Crew]."

So will rap and metal forget their differences and fight back? *Entertainment Weekly*'s music critic Greg Sandow is pragmatic: "That's like asking whether the race problem in America is going to be solved." Meanwhile in Greensboro, it's getting late and the mall is closing. The metalheads board their mean machines for a night of cruising, but it's the homeboys you can't help watching. Four or five cool haircuts around a car with the stereo pumped loud, doing spins, whirls, dancing there in the parking-lot.

Art

Dreaming and dealing

David Langsam explores the new wave of Aboriginal art

The sudden eruption of interest in contemporary Aboriginal art in the past few years is the result of improved supplies of modern art materials to traditional communities in the early 1970s, a dramatic change of policy by the Aboriginal Arts Board of the Australia Council in the mid-1970s, and a decade of fermentation.

In *Songlines*, Bruce Chatwin describes an outback Aboriginal painter, Winston Japurula, doing business with a Sydney-based dealer in Aboriginal art. She asks him to name his price and after lengthy silence he finally shouts:

"Six thousand dollars!"

Mrs Houston nearly fell off her stool. "Six thousand dollars! You have to be joking."

"Well, why are you asking seven thousand fuckin' dollars for one of my paintings in your fuckin' exhibition in Adelaide?"

Aboriginal art has been a hugely profitable venture for white people ever since Albert Namatjira painted watercolour landscapes and was ripped off by the "official art system". Hailed as Australia's foremost Aboriginal painter and made an "honorary white", in 1958 Namatjira was charged with supplying liquor to his family and died shortly after his release from an Aboriginal reserve.

Some of the Aboriginal paintings now on sale in Britain cost more than $A7,000 (£3,200) and the collision between the traditionally bitchy art world and the political in-fighting of Aboriginal communities has become a minefield.

The **Tagari Lia** (My Family) is the first international arts festival organised by Aboriginal people, who chose the works and set the prices. Glasgow's Third Eye Centre adds a percentage for its efforts.

Contemporary Aboriginal styles range from the traditional dot paintings of Central Australia and the herringbone cross-hatching of Arnhem Land, to batik and bark paintings, watercolours and a variety of work from Urban Koories. Les Griggs integrates Aboriginal and western influences: a line of coffins set in a traditional background—each adorned with a junkie's syringe. Despite the advances of the past 20 years, Aboriginals still have the world's highest rates of preventable disease, addiction and unemployment and there are a disproportionate number in prison. Their life is reflected in the ironic joke: "Did you hear Johnny Dingo died?" "No, I didn't even know he'd been arrested."

Koorie is one of the names Aboriginals have adopted to describe themselves. The foundation of the Broome Aboriginal Medical Service,

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"Yumari" by Tjangala, depicts a giant man with a distended penis, part of a complex Dreamtime story

Aboriginal legal services, radio and television stations and art co-operatives are further examples of the Aboriginals' move towards self determination.

One of the first co-ops, Papunya Tula, in the Western Desert, is the fountainhead of modern Aboriginal painting. The Western Desert paintings originated from sand paintings several acres in size as well as body painting, rock carvings and Arnhem Land bark paintings.

Clifford Possum Tjapaltjarri was a gardener at the school and is now one of Australia's finest artists, earning more than £50,000 per annum from his *Dreamtime* stories (the myths and legends of the origin of the land).

Working on a large canvas on the floor of the Rebecca Hossack Gallery, he meticulously places dots forming concentric circles which join one part of a story to another. The 2m x 1m painting will cost £4,000.

"In early days [1975]," he says, "I was working on a canvas, one big canvas for lousy money, might be $A200 (£85). Might be really big one, ten foot long, might be $A300.

Possum checks with Alice Springs art gallery manager, John O'Laughlin, if it is acceptable to discuss current prices. O'Laughlin says the art galleries and committees generate a £50 million worldwide industry. He says good artists are no longer exploited because they know the prices. But the days of buying a painting worth hundreds of pounds for a cask of wine are not yet over.

The chair of the Aboriginal Arts Committee of the Australia Council, Lin Onus, himself a talented painter, wants stronger co-operatives, but is concerned that regulation could lead to artistic censorship. "Britain has seen a whole lot of hoaxers over the years. We want to put our weight behind the good galleries and dry up the supply of duds," he says.

He praises a past director of the Aboriginal Arts Board, Gary Foley, for a revolution in Aboriginal arts funding. A political activist, Foley was the first Koorie to head the board.

"Foley is the most important influence in Aboriginal arts for the last 200 years," says Onus. "He ended paternalism and introduced direct involvement. Aboriginals now talk about *their* Arts Board. They are passionately interested in its workings. Fifty per cent of white artists know of the Australia Council, but 95 per cent of Aboriginals know the Arts Board."

Rebecca Hossack was the first gallerist to exhibit Aboriginal art in Britain. Hossack sells chiefly to collectors (Possum's range from £900 to £7,000), and blames Britain's recession for poor sales at home. She says there is greater interest in France and the US—in New York big pieces fetch up to £50,000.

Hossack makes a 50 per cent mark-up for all her artists, but only buys Aboriginal art through the authorised co-operatives. For her, that's a matter of sensitivity, a sensitivity that some, like English entrepreneur, Patrick Corbally Stourton, don't share.

Corbally Stourton has worked in the City, travelled through Africa and spent several months in the Australian outback collecting more than 140 pieces. He refuses to discuss what he paid for his works. "I pay the best price for the best paintings," he says. But he has been criticised for not knowing enough about the art to keep certain tribal groups separate when hanging the paintings, and it is said that he pays very little for them. He insists that artists know their market value.

"The good artists are difficult to come by. 'Cause everybody wants them. More and more people are going to go up there, deal directly with the artists and get hold of them. [It] can do only one thing for the price, that's push it up. They're becoming very rare pieces." But there is concern within the Aboriginal community that the boom is leading to falling standards.

Corbally Stourton says he loves the desert and Aboriginals, but specifies that "the ones in the town aren't as friendly as the ones out of town". O'Laughlin distinguishes between "true Aboriginals" and "urban Aboriginals".

This is offensive to Aboriginals. Providing an independent economic base isn't. Both Koorie and white art dealers want to give everyone the opportunity to contribute to that economy by bringing the market to Europe.

Tagari Lia is at Third Eye Centre, 346-54 Sauchiehall Street, Glasgow, until 2 September; Glynn Vivian Gallery, Swansea, 22 September-17 November; Cornerhouse, Manchester, 7 December-27 January.

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Television

Masterminding melodrama

Rosalind Brunt passes sentence on "Verdict"

"I want to marry Katy. I love her. We have a really close affectionate relationship. But we don't have sex. I don't know what's right. Whether to go ahead with marriage. Or put it off and almost certainly lose her."

"Thank you, Bob," says the interviewer, moving away and approaching a large round table of intent, silent listeners. "Well, there you have it, ladies and gentlemen. Katy and Bob have been together for seven years. They're close, they're fond of one another, they do lots of things together. But for the last two years they haven't had sex... Can you have a proper marriage if you don't have sex?"

I'm not sure what sort of television this is, nor why the transitional hours of Saturday night/Sunday morning should have been appropriated by Channel 4 as its moral and social problem slot. First, *After Dark*, with its drawing-room hospitality and disconcerting shifts between somnolence and revelation; more recently, *Burning Embers*—bizarre locations, fancy guests and Tony Benn ruminating. And now **Verdict** from the innovative Wall to Wall Television which produced *The Media Show*.

Verdict starts like confessional television: the intimate interview full of spontaneous embarrassment, as pioneered by Desmond Wilcox on *Man Alive*. But this isn't documentary. And Bob, and Susan, who has to decide whether to put her mother in a home, and Jackie, who could pay off a loan if she became a prostitute, are all played by actors striving a mite too hard for naturalness, uneasy with the authentic mode.

Yet we are assured by the moderator that their stories are "real-life" dilemmas—to be debated for the next 75 minutes by the 12 people around the table. So actually it's a discussion programme. But certainly not the open-ended ramble that this slot has pioneered. Instead, it's tightly controlled and must produce results—the "verdict" derived from jury-room strategies.

It works like a game show. The moderators adopt nice, concerned social-worker personae, a manner more akin to the amiable authoritarianism of game show hosts. Introducing Bob's dilemma, the moderator says, à la Magnus Magnusson, "I'm here to ensure fair play and help you reach a verdict. I'm neutral. But I want to impress on *you* that it's your *responsibility* to arrive at a majority verdict." Mindful of their responsibility, the "jurors" troop in obediently; there's all the portentous solemnity of *Mastermind* as they declare a vote.

Each juror has four votes; after the first two, nobody is allowed to abstain and the moderator presses individuals to convince others to shift position and reach the desired conclusion. No messing about is allowed. In the first programme, a number of real-life solutions to indebtedness were proposed besides prostitution, only to be ruled out by the moderator, who said that we had to assume Jackie had already considered them all, otherwise the game would be spoiled. But other jurors collude with the rules too well, aiming to heighten suspense by (rather unconvincingly) changing their minds.

Besides the built-in suspense factor, what makes "Verdict" riveting is the lack of stereotyped viewpoints

But the tightness of the rules hasn't inhibited the range of moral positions and personal experiences that the jurors bring to the dilemmas. Besides the built-in suspense factor, what makes *Verdict* riveting viewing is the lack of predictable and stereotyped viewpoints. In juries carefully mixed on gender, age and ethnic grounds there have been no obvious "male" or "female" perspectives, no easy "old" versus "young" alignments, and, on the dilemma of white adopters for third-world babies, the four black members of the panel took distinct positions.

Game show or weighty discussion vehicle for "real-life" dilemmas? Make *your* mind up with *Verdict*

This could be read as a promotion of liberal individualism—a belief in the power of rational argument to overcome material categories of gender and ethnicity. Or, as I was persuaded, despite the bossy moderators, a degree of open-mindedness on the programme's part in recognising real social diversity.

To date, the predominant television vehicle for discussion of moral dilemmas has not been discussion programmes, but the fictional, and much more stereotypical, form of soap opera. There's been a lot of hoo-ha in both *Brookside* and *EastEnders* recently over the dilemma of whether a wife should ever tell her husband that he is not the biological father of her child. Soap operas draw on the existing "real lives" of a culture, but then have the fictional capacity to set a powerful agenda for discussion that spills into other national media as well as everyday conversation: "What would *you* do, if you were Sheila, Cindy or Sue?"

Verdict is hardly likely to be as effective as melodrama in generating public debate. Nevertheless, its mix of fictional, documentary and game show elements still yields interesting resolutions. The verdict on Bob's dilemma was certainly not what I'd expected. The jury decided by 7:5, not the sort of majority the moderators approve of, that Bob shouldn't marry Katy. And actually it wasn't so much celibacy that was the problem. More that he had a dilemma about it in the first place.

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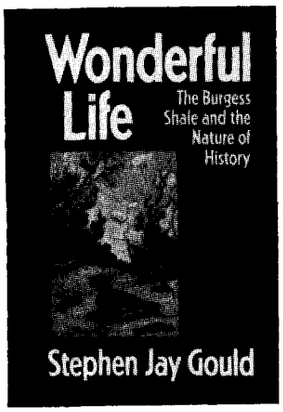

COLD WAR, THIRD WORLD
AN ESSAY ON SOVIET-AMERICAN RELATIONS
A brilliant, tightly argued and timely study. – The Sunday Times
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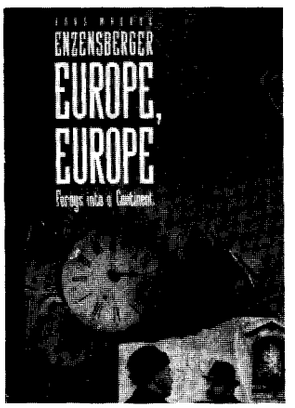

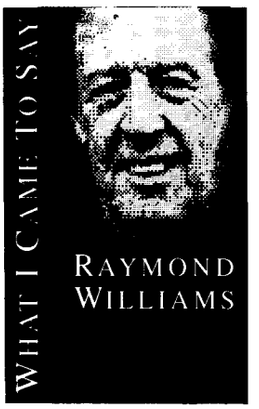

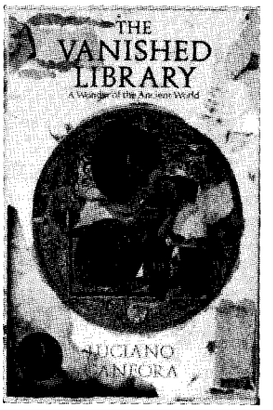

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Incredibly brilliant, beautiful businesswomen, Jacqueline Bisset and Carré Otis in *Wild Orchid*

Film

Beautiful sex

Suzanne Moore finds that the latest celluloid ventures into eroticism leave much to be desired

Who are the modern *femmes fatales*? In these days of wholesome heroines, Kathleen Turner, Ellen Barkin and Angelica Huston stand out with their ability to play dangerous as well as safe. But it's not just the roles these actresses play, but the way they play them. Meryl Streep and Michelle Pfeiffer will never be *femmes fatales*, precisely because they have to try so hard. The latest would-be *femme fatale* is our very own Joanne Whalley-Kilmer, who stars in the deliberately film noir-ish **Kill Me Again.**

For my money, Whalley-Kilmer is far too girly ever to be considered for such a role, but she has a go nonetheless. As Fay Forrester she robs a casino with her boyfriend, bumps him on the head and runs off with the money. To dispatch him for ever she approaches Jack Andrews (her real-life husband Val Kilmer), a down-at-heel private eye, and asks him to fake her murder. Jack does as she asks and inevitably starts to fall for her. But, in time-honoured tradition, the whole thing is a trap; she has run off to Reno with the money leaving him wanted for murder. Meanwhile her psychotic boyfriend Vince is in hot pursuit of both of them...

The plot twists and turns through the familiar and fashionable low-life of America and crams the screen with as many film noir tricks as it can— shadowy contrasts, lighting reflecting the psychological state of the characters and so on. But venetian blinds and shoulder pads do not a film noir make. It's as if director and writer John R Dahl has captured the surface of this kind of film-making without understanding the content.

This is nowhere more apparent than with Fay Forrester, who is a prisoner of circumstance and of men in a way that the classic *femme fatale* never would be. Having her squirm on the bed covered with blood simpering, "I always wondered what it would be like to die a really violent death," doesn't help. It's more victim than vamp. But wet-dream Whalley seems to have a penchant for these victim-type roles. The fact that her Jeff Bridges lookalike husband is in this one is really no excuse.

What possible excuse could Mickey Rourke have for appearing in **Wild Orchid**? But then what possible excuse could he have for appearing in most of the dross he's recently been involved with? Never mind, Mickey is a star and, as *Wild Orchid*'s director Zalman King keeps telling us, "Mickey is really rock 'n'roll." If this refers to O'Rourke's wardrobe, which seems to consist entirely of Keith Richard's cast-offs, this is undoubtedly true.

Wild Orchid comes from the same stable as *9½ Weeks* and that other pinnacle of eroticism, *Two Moon Junction*, but Zalman just won't give up. If you've seen the TV ads you've probably already seen the best bits of the film, but if you haven't I'd say it's almost worth the admission price to "enter this world of grand adventure and stunning sensuality. Desperate love and unthinkable passion."

Unthinkable passion starts off in Kansas, where Emily (model Carré Otis, "ardently devoted to good health, fitness and nutrition") boards a bus to head for an interview with a law firm. At the interview we find out that Emily speaks five languages including "rudimentary Chinese" so it's a pity she speaks her own with all the passion of a speak-your-weight machine.

This little scene exists to establish that Emily is not only incredibly beautiful but incredibly clever; it makes one long for the day when sex objects were girls with too much time and money on their hands and didn't have to have doctorates in divinity to prove what well-rounded people they were. Come back Emmanuelle, all is forgiven.

Anyway, Emily bombs off to Rio and is met at the airport by Claudia, another incredibly brilliant and beautiful businesswoman played by Jacqueline Bisset. Claudia is like Alexis Colby on speed; "Close that deal, you motherfucker," she shouts gaily in the hotel lobby she appears to live in. Suddenly she has to jet off to Buenos Aires leaving *ingénue* Emily to meet her date for the night.

The date is of course Mickey, who has clearly overdone it with the TanFastic and the Marlon Brando evening classes. Soon, however, he is whisking Emily about, unembarrassed by lines like "To find yourself, you have to lose yourself", and "Haven't you ever felt primal?" This being Brazil everyone feels primal all the time, for here Brazil consists of little more than pulsating brown bodies—a kind of all-encompassing sexual therapy for rich white people's hang-ups. And Mickey is very rich (though someone should tell Zalman that the businessman as sex symbol is rather passé; the modern sex symbol would be communing with the rainforest rather than trying to cut it down).

But even for Mickey money doesn't buy happiness, though it does buy Harley-Davidsons which he rides about on for no apparent reason. And he has a problem. He can't be touched. So, to get her man, Emily has to go through the usual voyeuristic permutations. Watch another couple fucking, fuck someone else while he watches... This is all done with the slickness of a Martini advert. Claudia confides that mystery-man Mickey "stuttered so badly as a child, he could barely talk", which in the light of Mickey's Method Mumble is inadvertently hysterical. In the end, surprise, surprise, he can be touched and is soon bonking away alongside the rest of Brazil.

With its tasteful erotica, *Wild Orchid* is stuck in some awful sixties mythology which mouths clichés like "Sex is beautiful", but actually means every problem can be cured by a good shagging. The film has generated some gossip about whether Rourke and Otis are simulating sex or it's the real thing, but I guarantee that by the end of *Wild Orchid* you wouldn't care if Mickey Rourke was dressed up as Adolf Hitler and doing it with a badger. Though I'd like to see Zalman King saying that this too was simply part of the beautiful, healthy adventure of contemporary sexuality.

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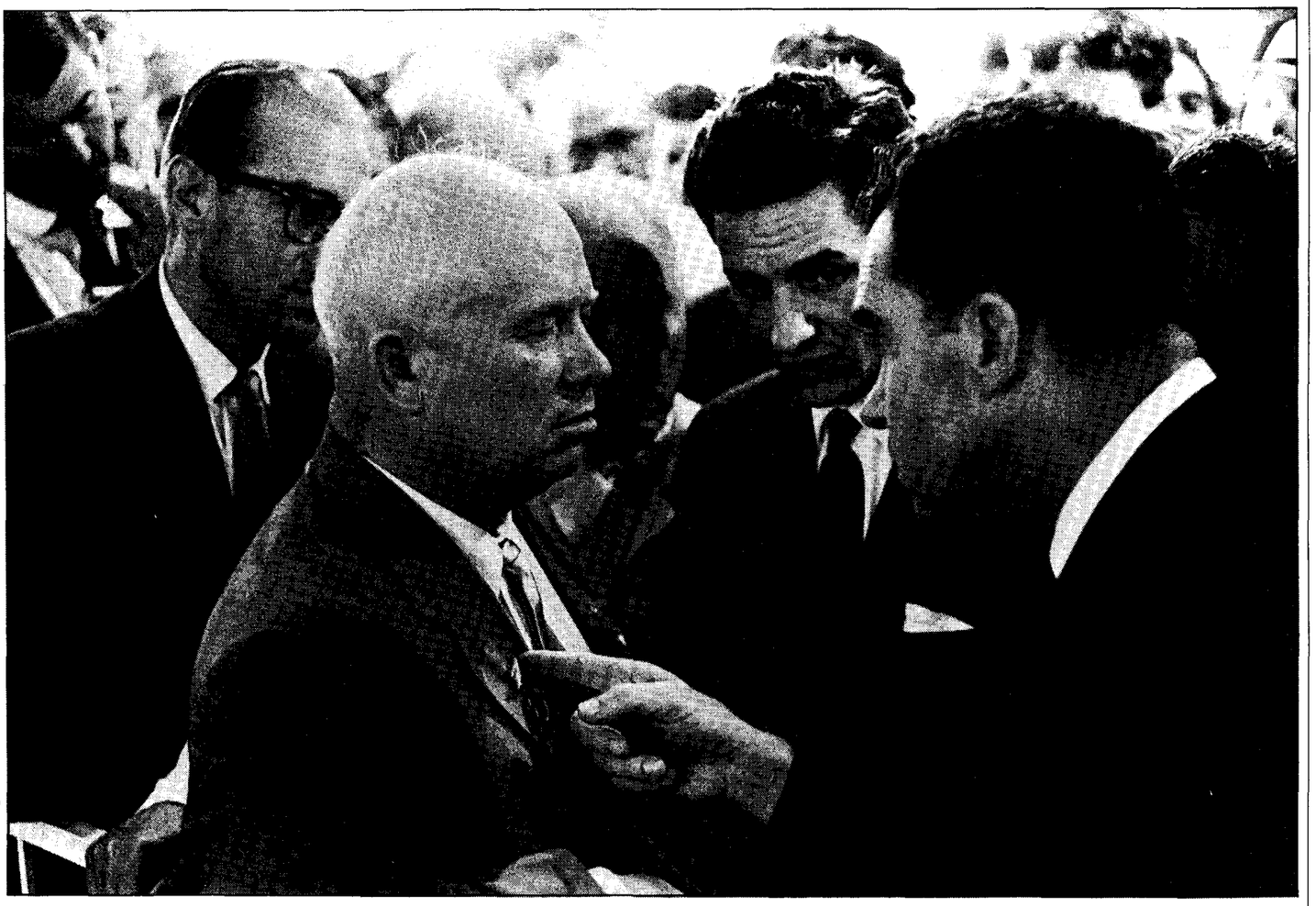

Elliott Erwitt/Magnum

Old contenders

IN THE ARENA: A MEMOIR OF VICTORY, DEFEAT AND RENEWAL
Richard Nixon
Simon & Schuster £16.95
KHRUSHCHEV ON KHRUSHCHEV
Sergei Khrushchev (edited and translated by William Taubman)
Little, Brown £12.95

Lawrence Freedman

On 13 October 1964 Soviet leader Nikita Sergeyevich Khrushchev was recalled to a meeting of the Praesidium (now the Politburo) of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union to be told that his colleagues had decided to oust him. Almost exactly a decade later, in August 1974, Richard Milhouse Nixon resigned as President of the United States as a result of the Watergate scandal on being told that even his closest supporters felt he should go.

Although he was bitter at the accusations levelled against him, Khrushchev did not put up much of a fight, and he took some satisfaction from the fact that he had moved the political process sufficiently far from Stalinism that his ouster was moderately constitutional in form, and that he did not suffer the fate that he might have done in the bad old days. Nixon considered himself to be the victim of the double standards of the liberal establishment who turned his minor mistakes into major crimes.

Both men are now enjoying a degree of rehabilitation. For Khrushchev this is posthumous—he died in 1971. He can be referred to openly by name rather than by the deviation of "voluntarism" he was said to represent, and his period in office is being properly assessed. Nixon is still going strong and enjoying some rehabilitation. He has just opened a $21 million library dedicated to his career, with a celebration in which he was joined by Ford, Reagan and Bush, the other extant Republican presidents.

Khrushchev's monument, a striking headstone on his grave, is much more modest, though it required representations to the top of the Party before it could be approved and was constructed by an artist, Ernst Neizvestny, who soon afterwards emigrated to the west, as the authorities had made his life impossible.

These two books are both part of the process of rehabilitation and describe how it has been achieved. Khrushchev and Nixon's memoirs have already appeared and so much of the "new" material concerns their fate on leaving office.

Nixon's is the least interesting. His original memoirs were full and he has hardly been backward in offering his views on matters of the day since his disgrace. Dedicated Nixonologists may find a few nuggets but I found little. Any contrition over Watergate is kept firmly under control:

"I played by the rules of politics as I found them. Not taking a higher road than my predecessors and my adversaries was my central mistake."

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When he is not dropping the names of the senior figures he has been in contact with since 1974, Nixon is returning to the familiar moments of his career—Hiss, the Checkers speech, the 1960 campaign, the breakthrough with China. Meanwhile, his views on contemporary matters are unremarkable. He is generally confused on the question of the changes in the Soviet Union, a matter on which he claims the expertise of experience, while he takes a much more subtle and optimistic line on China (perhaps because the Chinese leadership continues to hold him in high regard).

The book is organised into 40 short chapters with headings such as "Family", "Teachers", "Temperance", "Reading", "Risks", "Media", "Staff", "Causes". These allow for a mixture of reminiscence, reflection and homily. The portraits of individuals tend to be one-dimensional and Churchill and de Gaulle are quoted endlessly to give authority to pedestrian musings. Nonetheless, Nixon does succeed to the extent that one is reminded of his political strengths. One would hesitate to offer him as a model to an aspiring young politician, but some useful advice might still be gleaned from these pages.

One would hesitate to offer Khrushchev as a model either. Unlike Nixon, he could never be accused of being buttoned-up. He could be moody and impetuous but then expansive and imaginative. His disillusionment was with Stalinism but he never lost his faith in the Party and so he remained very much the product of the system he was trying to reform. The picture that emerges from his son's portrait is much more rounded than that of Nixon.

Khrushchev makes the occasional appearance in the Nixon memoir. Under the heading of "Temperance", Nixon notes the need to follow the drinking habits of one's opposite number in a diplomatic negotiation. He cites Khrushchev as someone who could let himself go when there was nothing serious to discuss but sipped only lightly on his vodka when getting down to business.

Nixon has one appearance in the Khrushchev memoir. Before the start of his 1968 presidential campaign, Nixon visited Moscow and stopped by Khrushchev's apartment. No one was there, so Nixon left his card and a note. Khrushchev's son tells us the gesture pleased his father, "although he didn't have a very high opinion of Nixon".

The drama in this book comes with the story of the fall of Khrushchev. According to his son, he was thinking of retirement but could think of no one suitable to succeed him following the stroke of Frol Kozlov, of whom he apparently thought highly. Most western commentators have seen Kozlov as Khrushchev's main conservative opponent—his Ligachev.

Sergei offers a remarkable account of how the plotters moved among the higher ranks of the Party to garner support and how the bodyguard of one of the more vindictive plotters, Nikolai Ignatov, eventually got the word to him. Armed with this information, he sought to warn his father and had a long conversation with Anastas Mikoyan, Khrushchev's closest associate on the Praesidium—but the scale of the conspiracy, and the identity of leading comrades such as Podgorny and Brezhnev at its fore, provoked disbelief.

Leonid Brezhnev naturally does not come out of this account well—there is even a suggestion that he considered poisoning Khrushchev. He comes over as oily and shifty, enjoying pomp and ceremony more than hard work. Aleksei Kosygin shows more decency and is eventually the man who gets the monument approved. The overall picture of the Party is of a gigantic club, with the constraints of excessively formal structures overcome by personal networks based on old loyalties and favours.

Khrushchev's removal from office meant that he was effectively black-balled and even his former friends felt it prudent to have as little as possible to do with him. Mikoyan was the only senior figure who made any attempt to stay in touch. In these circumstances, getting a memoir written and passed to the west, with the KGB attempting to frustrate the effort, was some achievement.

Sergei's style is simple but straightforward and the overall effect is compelling. He has the benefit of an excellent American editor who has not only provided a helpful introduction but has raised queries against the manuscript and demanded further explanation from the author. Nixon might have benefited from the same treatment.

Muslim sisters

OPENING THE GATES: A CENTURY OF ARAB FEMINIST WRITING
Margot Badran and Miriam Cooke (editors)
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Fadwa Tuqan (translated by Olive Kenny)
The Women's Press £12.95

Kitty Warnock

A lecture on how industrialisation has marginalised women, delivered to a meeting of women in Cairo in 1909, is one of the surprises in the anthology, *Opening the Gates*. This selection of fiction, poetry, personal memoirs and polemical journalism shows the development of feminism in the Arab world from the 1860s, a field unknown to most western readers. Many of the texts are here translated into English for the first time.

To the question, "Is there a specifically Arab feminism?", the editors reply that for Arab women the definition of feminism must include "visible feminism"—organised, articulate political and social demands—and "invisible feminism", the struggles of individuals to achieve consciousness and to rebel against, or at least deal with, oppression. Such struggles are important in Arab women's experience, even if the analysis of oppression resulting from them may not be very radical.

The first two sections of this collection, "Awareness" and "Rejection", reflect on personal experiences of seclusion, powerlessness, inequality. Some of the texts show women as victims, but many are more robust, like Alifa Rifaat's story of two girls managing the honour code, or Wadida Wassef's comic gem, "Hasan's Wives". The third section, "Activism", voices demands for rights and freedoms—from the individual's private "right to know myself without any control" to public debates on education, suffrage, veiling. (Sexuality and control of women's sexuality are not at present public debates in the Arab world, and are hardly touched on here.)

The editors in their introduction suggest that "feminist agendas [in the Middle East]... are grounded in nationalism and Islam", but as the connections are implicit in the historical and social contexts of the texts rather than addressed explicitly, the reader is left with many unanswered questions. The only discussion of nationalism is Marie-Aimee Helie-Lucas's stimulating analysis of how nationalism, religion and socialism were used to control women during and after the Algerian independence struggle.

The absence of editorial comment or texts on the relation of feminism to Islam is a serious lack for a western reader, given our unfamiliarity with Islam and the high profile of Islamic fundamentalism today. Almost all the writers are Muslims, and one cannot help asking how they have reconciled their feminism with apparently fundamentally patriarchal Islam. The feminism that sees Islam as an obstacle is not explained, and, on the other side, though we are shown the debate between traditionalists hostile to women's progress and feminists who appeal to the status originally accorded to women in Islam, we are not told whether these arguments come from "Muslim Sisters" in the Islamic revival movement.

The act of writing has itself been "liberation" for generations of Arab women. Socially acceptable, private and public at the same time, it has allowed them to reflect, protest and communicate from their seclusion. Literature is the one field in which some upper-class women could be educated to the same level as men and be acknowledged without stepping out of their homes. One poet wrote of another in 1867, "She has disappeared from sight, secluded by veils" but her poetry "shines like a string of pearls"; another experienced "poetry as perpetual rebellion", another as "the profound expression of crisis at the level of skin and reason"; for many more women, writing has been a statement of identity and a way of dealing with isolation.

For Fadwa Tuqan, on the contrary, isolation from her society made her "lose her commitment to life" and at times she found it impossible to write. While her father was demanding that she write political poetry for the Palestinian cause, the frustration of seclusion was driving her almost to suicide.

Her autobiography is a patchy book, the sententious style reflecting the difficulty of translating from Arabic, the occasional naïvety (in her descriptions of visits to Oxford and Stratford, for example) perhaps a result of such a secluded life. But it is worth reading for the personal story—the sense of non-entity she

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had from childhood, the oppressiveness of life at home in Nablus with two families hardly on speaking terms, and her struggle for education. Though she makes comparisons throughout between the oppression of women and the oppression of occupation, in fact we get little idea of the sources of her poetry or her life as a well-known political poet, probably a reflection of the split between public and private imposed by being a woman.

Loneliness of a 16 year old

WILDLIFE
Richard Ford
Collins Harvill
£6.95 paperback/£12.50 hardback
HOMEBOY
Seth Morgan
Chatto & Windus £13.99

Stephen Trombley

With few exceptions, lyricism in novels goes in inverse proportion to length. A generalisation if you like, but it throws up a useful way of looking at this odd brace of novels, if only by way of contradiction. Richard Ford's new novel is short and anything but lyrical, but it succeeds in a very difficult intention. Seth Morgan's first novel is very long, is meant to be lyrical in every line, and succeeds only in defeating what is perhaps a doomed intention.

Ford, whose earlier novels have earned him a comparison with Hemingway—unfair, because Ford is the better writer—tells the simple story of a three-day episode in the lives of a man and woman as observed from their 16-year-old-son's point of view. Ford's themes are the preoccupations of the boy: his love for his parents, loneliness and a desire for knowledge.

The father is a middle-class drifter of considerable charm: a golfing pro with an elegant swing, beautiful hands and an appealing stoicism. The mother, following from one rented house to the next, working as a bookkeeper and living in godforsaken towns that time and money have passed by, lacks her husband's optimism. College educated, she sees how things are. Against the stereotypes of place and time—Montana in 1960—she also *says* how things are. As a result, the son is faced with two contradictory views of the world which he would prefer to be resolved into one. He needs to believe that his parents' marriage, their love for one another, and his for them, can work the conjuring trick of healing the rift between optimism and reality.

The story takes place against the background of a terrible forest fire which, as with all the other elements of this mature novel, Ford never obviously elevates to the status of symbol. The fire burns, destroying life around it, and becomes the focus of hundreds of desperate lives. Unemployed Indians and men down on their luck go off in cattle trucks to fight the fire, living in rough camps on its shifting perimeter. Women, hungry for adventure, are drawn to the camp and to the exhilaration the fire incites in the men.

In the space of three days the husband loses his job, having been accused, rightly or wrongly, of a theft from the golf club. The son realises that his parents do not sleep together. The father goes away to fight the fire. The mother finds an apartment in town and takes a lover in the form of a gross businessman, and their activities are partly witnessed by the son.

What is satisfying in *Wildlife* is its density. This is proper storytelling, lean and taut. And it is real, grown-up life. Ford captures perfectly the loneliness that can only be had in families.

Seth Morgan's *Homeboy*, a first novel by a man whose CV includes being Janis Joplin's "fiancé at the time of her death" and a convicted armed robber, has a different view of real life. His tortured saga of Californian streets attempts to make every sentence count, ensuring that very few do. The whole 390 pages goes by in a blur of vernacular meant to be an updating of beat: "She was jonesin' on that carnal metaphor for her soul: the Life—in a minor key, played on a G-string tourniquet." Chicano whores are "tacotwats", the men drive "beanmobiles", the Chinese are "ricepropelled punks" and the whole palette of colours goes monochrome very quickly. If Morgan would stop using Rickie Lee Jones as a role model for novel writing and find an editor prepared to say boo to his flapping geese, his next novel might be one to read.

A month in Spain

TILTING AT DON QUIXOTE
Nicholas Wollaston
André Deutsch £14.95

Jeremy Lewis

Ever since he joined the Navy in 1944 at the age of 18 and was sent minesweeping in the Indian Ocean, Nicholas Wollaston seems to have led a life of almost ceaseless vagabondage and adventure, combining extended trips to every conceivable country with the role of "reluctant neighbour, impatient father, unreliable husband" and the writing of novels and travel books. Yet the most dramatic incident in his life occurred as long ago as 1930, when his father—an explorer who doubled as a tutor at King's, Cambridge—was murdered by a demented undergraduate.

Three years ago, trying to make sense of his turbulent self-contained career and his father's haunting presence, he decided to spend a month in Spain, following his hero Don Quixote across the flat, featureless plains of La Mancha, where "the land waits for something to happen to it, like the empty page in the typewriter each morning, waiting for the words to appear". And in *Tilting at Don Quixote* he interweaves his Spanish impressions, and a retelling of the Don's delusions, with the autobiography of a writer who, though—in the words of his long-suffering wife—"weak and muddly and a bit hopeless", has also, he insists, remained "nobody's man except my own".

Oddly enough, for a travel writer, the rather routine Spanish chapters seem almost superfluous to requirements, a clever device that doesn't quite come off: while the recollections of earlier wanderings—sailing to the Solomons with a bagpipe-playing, gin-toting Naval commander, picking up syphilis in a Cambodian opium den, beating his way round China, the Caribbean and the Middle East—are often as peremptory as a postcard home. Though an elegant and efficient writer, he is an oddly flavourless one. For much of the time one is left with a curious, unsatisfactory impression of an amiable dilettante who has been everywhere and done everything but can't make it seem of great interest to the world at large.

Wollaston's mother was a Meinertzhagen, related to both Beatrice Webb and Stafford Cripps. Young Nicholas was sent to Winchester when the war broke out; after the Navy he spent four terms at King's before going out to east Africa to join an uncle in the leather trade. From then on he led the peripatetic life, combining journalism and his own writing with sexual triumphs, booze, flute-playing and—during a year in Jerusalem—some amateur spying. His wife Deirdre, some 15 years his junior, was first spotted in Fulham, smoking a pipe: their relationship—he tells us—is passionate, resentful and frustrating, culminating in her setting fire to herself in their Suffolk farmhouse.

The book comes into its own when he gets on to its real subject matter: the life of the writer, and his own, all-too-obvious, weaknesses. However likeable or well-intentioned a writer may be, his way of life involves duplicity, disloyalty and ruthlessness, "the desire for companionship and the desire for privacy; the need to communicate and the more urgent need not to be found out; the hope of love but fear of the trap it lays". An inveterate romancer, he confesses a particularly soft spot for the kind of man who "walked out, leaving wife, children, dog, garden, to become in turn a bus driver and a sailor and a gigolo, and returned secretly to observe his home without him—to spy on his past and imagine his alternative present".

Small wonder that Deirdre should tell him that "it's your perpetual ambivalence I find impossible to live with", or that—house-hunting in Suffolk—she should be left to do all the donkey work ("At the agent's brochure I hardly got beyond correcting the prose"). Downing the gins at a lunch-time party, "I saw myself as I thought I wouldn't look for ten more years: skinny, scrawny, bald, trying in a polo-neck sweater and with a light tenor voice to strike a note of youthful middle age". Faced by years of "increasing asthma and diminishing royalties", he broods (unpersuasively) on suicide. All too often in this uneven, overlong book he comes across as a bit of an ass, and a rather conceited one at that; but his fluency and his cold yet sympathetic eye for his own, familiar failings win one round in the end.

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The new dissidence

FAREWELL PERESTROIKA: A SOVIET CHRONICLE
Boris Kagarlitsky (translated by Rick Simon)
Verso £8.95 paperback/£24.95 hardback

Matt Seaton

It is reassuring to know that there are still "dissidents" in the Soviet Union in these days of *glasnost*. Boris Kagarlitsky, published regularly now by Verso and adopted as the New Left's "man in Moscow", is determined to be a thorn in the side of almost everyone from conservative apparatchiks and Russian chauvinists to Gorbachev personality cultists and Muscovite liberals.

Kagarlitsky articulates an insider's perspective on the accelerating pace of political change in the Soviet Union which is all but ignored by the west (and often embargoed at home, as he frequently complains). As a leading member of the Moscow Popular Front (an alliance of critical socialists and reform communists) and now one of their representatives in the Moscow Soviet, his affiliations had until recently placed him on the periphery of Soviet political life, but his *Chronicle* records 18 critical months of decline for the Party and of growing influence for the "informals".

Farewell Perestroika is, as the title suggests, intended to cause serious indigestion to those who've swallowed *perestroika* whole and generally over-indulged on *glasnost*. Though no Gramscian (rather a socialist in the traditional mould), Kagarlitsky expresses a profound scepticism about Gorbachev's "passive revolution"—what he calls "the failure of *perestroika* from above". The real substance of the critique is saved for the final pages, a slight but recurrent defect in this journal which tends to take as read, or defer actual analysis, in favour of its breathless encounter with meetings and demonstrations.

But it is refreshing to revisit these dramatic events and view them in their true proportion, rather than through the wrong end of a telescope. Few western reporters or commentators have approached the clarity and crisp definition of Kagarlitsky's account of the ethnic and political conflicts in the Trans-Caucasian and central Asian republics in "The Restless Borderlands" chapter (facilitated by the intelligent inclusion of a purpose-drawn map of the USSR). Our chronicler seems at the height of his powers when describing the agonies of the empire "in its death throes"—both in their tragic aspect (with the ethnicidal conflict in Nagorny Karabakh) and in their comic aspect (with a neat anecdote about Estonians and Uzbeks confounding each other by rejecting the common colonial language of Russian for technical instructions accompanying traded goods).

Boris Kagarlitsky is less convincing on the home territory of Russian and Muscovite politics. Again, the journal form exposes him to this accusation of weakness: in the heat of the moment, he tends to resort to unsubstantiated jibes or, worse still, the crudest of political sloganising to make his point. A "liberal", in Kagarlitsky's lexicon, is little better than something you scrape off your shoe, a usage that many left-inclined western readers will find anachronistic, to say the least. Only his rare insight and sharp pen extricate him from an ugly sectarian contempt for "the rising stars of the new Soviet parliamentarianism".

This popular frontist's socialism is underpinned by an undiluted *ouvrierisme*: the statement that "a powerful socialist organisation was needed capable of drawing behind it broad strata of workers and of beginning to fight in a revolutionary manner" would seem more appropriate for the 1920s than the 1990s; while some of his favourite terms ("crisis", "the masses", "proletariat") have become museum pieces of western Marxism. Despite evident intellectual flair, Kagarlitsky seems content with outmoded socialist maxims which in the west used to earn the rejoinder, "Why don't you go and live in the Soviet Union then?" The perplexing thing is, he's already there.

The road to theocracy

PRAY TV: TELEVANGELISM IN AMERICA
Steve Bruce
Routledge £10.99 paperback/£35 hardback

Douglas Kennedy

A true story: two summers ago, while loitering among born-again Christians in the American south, I spent an evening in a religious television station on the outskirts of Miami, as part of the studio audience for what could best be described as a charismatic version of *Question Time*. During a break in the broadcast, I ducked into the loo. A gent walked in—a fleshy guy in his late thirties, dressed in a white Filipino shirt—and sidled up to the urinal next to mine, placing his big calfskin-bound Bible on top of it. Then he introduced himself as Joey and instigated the following conversation:

"Here for last night's show?"

"No," I said. "What were they discussing?"

"Aids," he said. "A Christian response to the threat of Aids."

I said, "What *is* a Christian response to Aids?"

"Abstain from sex and pray."

"Prayer can cure Aids?" I said.

"Sure it can," Joey said. "I mean, prayer cured my genital herpes."

Travel through that expanse of the American south known as the Bible belt, and you will stumble across numerous believers like Joey, who will tell you how their faith in the Lord helped them finance that Corvette sportscar they always wanted, or enabled them to cough up a malignant tumour at breakfast. And, though one is always tempted to cackle cynically at such baroque expressions of religious fervour, the fact remains that (if the opinion polls are to be believed) around 25 per cent of all adult Americans now call themselves born-again Christians.

Of course, throughout the 1980s—as certain powerful "picture tube men of God" like Jerry Falwell and Pat Robertson joined political ranks with the exponents of Reaganite conservatism—there was much nervous speculation about whether the United States was about to enter into a period of "Holy Terror", in which fundamentalist Christians waged war on America's traditional civil liberties and veered the country down the road of theocracy.

But, as Steve Bruce's new book makes abundantly clear, the chances of "a popular conservative Christianity taking over the country after the fashion of Iran's Shi'ite Islam" was never really on the cards (as the failed presidential campaign of Pat Robertson amply demonstrated). Rather, the real issue at the heart of the debate on televangelism is a simple one: why have so many Americans turned to these electronic ministries for spiritual succour, and what does this phenomenon tell us about the state of the contemporary American psyche?

Bruce—a reader in sociology at Queen's University, Belfast—has written an exemplary, if rather academic inquiry into these questions, and one that hones in on several key historic and social factors underlying this Christian revival. He reminds us that the roots of all this evangelical ardour extend as far back as the early Puritan colonies in Massachusetts, via the religious Great Awakenings of the 1740s and the 1830s. He also clearly recognises that the entire American notion of re-invention—the national belief in both the perfectibility of man and the ability to change one's life anew—is a key to understanding the popularity of televangelists, and their sales pitch that "God can turn things around for you".

Indeed, throughout his detailed analysis of the structure of certain major televangelists' institutions, Bruce never falls into the trap of looking upon these small-screen crusaders for Christ as mere charlatans or candidates for a freak show. Instead, he shows how their mammon-oriented antics form part of a long "revival tent" tradition in evangelical America. And when it comes to asking why so many solid citizens were willing to tithe millions of dollars to such an obvious ecclesiastical schlock merchant as Jim Bakker, Bruce is correct in pointing out that the appeal of the televangelists can be found in the "feel-good" gospel they preach to an audience that has lost its way in an intensely competitive society, bound up in the pursuit of happiness.

As an academic study, *Pray TV* wins points for its ability to get to the intellectual heart of the matter and pinpoint the true role of televangelism in America's spiritual landscape. Stylistically, however, it never transcends its arid doctoral thesis prose, to the point where even many of its more idiosyncratic anecdotes about evangelical fun-and-games tend to be rendered humourless.

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Searchlight on a scab

BOY
James Hanley
André Deutsch £11.99

Zoë Heller

Boy was first published in 1931. Four years later, a Lancashire taxi driver borrowed the book from a local library. His wife, disgusted by what she surmised were its contents (she only ever read the jacket blurb), took the book to a police station in Bury. The police were also disgusted and a court case ensued. Hanley's publishers were found guilty of issuing an obscene libel and ordered to pay a fine of £400. *Boy* was withdrawn—but not before the novelist Sir Hugh Walpole had publicly torn up a copy in a London bookshop and commented, "It is so unpleasant and ugly, both in narration and incident, that I wonder the printers did not go on strike while printing it."

Reissued 60 years on, this novel is unlikely to make quite the same sort of splash. Literary candour has come far since 1931 and *Boy*, with its period euphemisms and prim circumlocutions, suggests how far. This is a book that refers to female genitalia as "the philosophic centre". What once raised hackles now raises a smile. Yet, if it no longer offends, *Boy* has retained the capacity to disturb. The modern reader, as Anthony Burgess observes in his introduction, "will undoubtedly be shocked, but the shock will have nothing to do with the titillations of the pornographic." It is not as pornography, but as a period piece of angry realism, that *Boy* still packs a formidable punch.

Hanley's story is of Arthur Fearon, a 13-year-old boy, forced by his impoverished parents to leave school and become a dock labourer. In order to escape his violent father and another day spent emptying out bilge tanks, he stows away on a merchant ship bound for Alexandria. Hanley, who himself stowed away at the age of 13, paints a terrifying picture of sea life. Bullied, lectured, beaten and sexually assaulted by the crew, Fearon finds himself, once again, at the bottom of the pecking order. His ship is a microcosm of the community he sought to leave behind and his escape, it rapidly transpires, is no escape at all.

Things keep getting grislier. In Alexandria, Fearon is taken to a brothel on "Sister Street" where one of the crew pays for him to be deflowered. Back aboard ship, he is discovered to have syphilis, and the drunken captain decides to put him out of his misery by suffocating him in his bunk.

All of this Hanley raps out with fierce straightforwardness. The novel's rough-hewn quality is partly explained by the haste in which it was written (Hanley cantered through it in only ten days), but it also seems to have been a matter of stylistic choice. Certain episodes—notably Fearon's encounter with the Egyptian prostitute—suggest an incipient modernism but, for the most part, Hanley's style is, as William Faulkner once described it, "just language, like a good, clean cyclone". There is no irony, no distance, no *cleverness* in his telling—only an urgent setting-down of things. Hanley once referred to his novel as "a searchlight on a scab".

For a modern audience, this strident simplicity is the peculiar challenge of *Boy*. Readers reared on tricksier stuff may find Hanley's raw, earnest prose something of a shock to the system. It dates from an era when television had not yet done away with literature's documentary function—when books purveyed not just ideas, but *news*. In later work, Hanley complemented his provocative material with adventures in form—but here, his ambition is only to tell it how it is. Very little fiction these days describes working-class experience with such plain, polemical fervour. Very few writers are prepared merely to "shine a searchlight on a scab". *Boy* is not a polished work, but its horrors stay with the reader, and its gusts of inelegant ire prove curiously refreshing.

The counting compulsion

EMPIRES OF TIME: CALENDARS, CLOCKS AND CULTURE
Anthony Aveni
I B Tauris £16.95

Jenny Diski

Is it possible that what distinguishes the human species from all others is the obsessive need to count? The history of science tells us that humans search for regularities and methods of predicting them, but, when it comes right down to it, isn't that just a fancy way of saying that we like to do sums and make the answers come out right? It's just a thought, but apply it to mysteries of the past—Stonehenge, the orientation of Maya temples—and you have a common denominator that unifies all the disputes about exactly what they were for. Ancient monuments are, if nothing else, the manifestation of our counting compulsion.

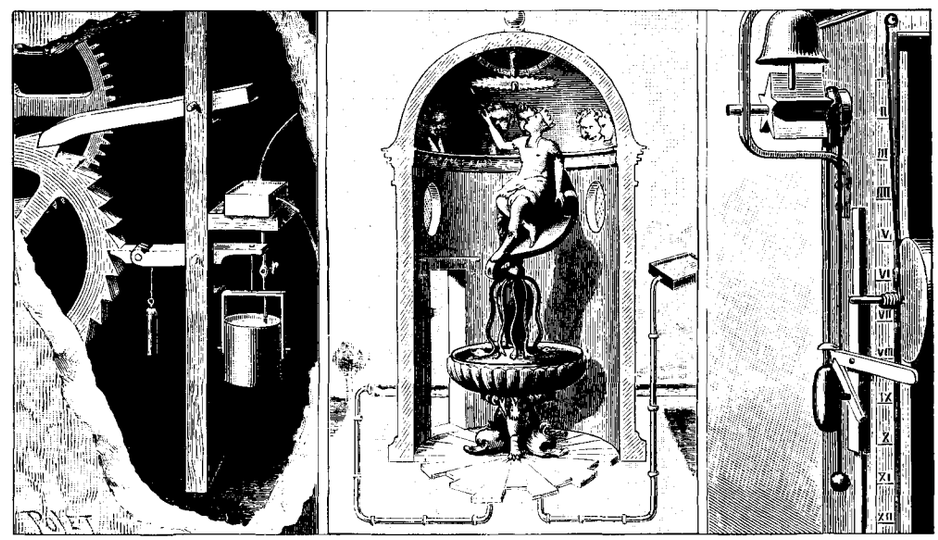
Calendars and time-keeping are excuses to do sums, *par excellence*. But the Nuer of the upper Nile, at least, manage without counting. They make time follow their activities: "The temporal logic seems to be: if I'm going to church then this must be Sunday; or *since* people are on the move going between camp and village, *then it must be* dwat..."

Empires of Time looks at the variety of time systems humans have invented, beginning with the development of seasonal and clock time in the west and ending with an analysis of pre-Columbian time-keeping. Professor Aveni, being an astronomer and anthropologist, is well placed to discuss the peculiar mix of abstraction and practicality that time-keeping involves.

He begins with Hesiod. *Works and Days* portrays the dichotomy: *Works* being essentially an almanac for farmers—a practical handbook using celestial events to map out the agricultural year; *Days* being a metaphysical calendar where each day of the month is designated propitious or otherwise for various human activities. They are different systems running in tandem: the former based on the solar cycle, the latter on the phases of the moon. The development of the western calendar has revolved around the attempt to get an ever closer relation between the moon year and the weather-making circuit of the sun: a counter's nirvana of complexity.

Western time-keeping on an hourly and daily basis has been conditioned by the needs of religion and economics. The first "clocks" were church bells, and it is probably no coincidence that public clocks are to be found on church towers. Later, the needs of commerce would take priority. Business is about meetings and deadlines; where would the executive be without the chiming hour of the digital watch? Even so, the hundredths-of-a-second precision of vibrating quartz crystals seems more to do with obsession than need.

The time-keeping of ancient bureaucracies



Mary Evans/WATER CLOCKS

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such as the Mayas and Incas, says Aveni, is of a different order. For them, dynastic matters were of the essence; their concern was to legitimise the current ruling house by tracing its origins back into mythic, godlike time.

All cultures, however, have creation myths that describe the beginning of time, and most of them, like Genesis, begin with an undifferentiated universe that the gods, or God, separate out. They all posit the creation of order from chaos, and the simultaneous birth of mankind that gives human purpose to the story. All, that is, except our current creation story—the Big Bang—which, on the contrary, is the story of entropy and inevitable disintegration. Modern science offers us a purposeless unilinear universe that is in flight from its original order and in which human beings have no role or goal. It seems that of all other cultures, both historical and contemporary, only ours has taken the compulsion to count to the point where we have counted ourselves out.

Female essence

SOVIET WOMEN: WALKING THE TIGHTROPE
Francine du Plessix Gray
Doubleday £13.99

Catherine Porter

Francine du Plessix Gray's maternal Russian origins have given her a lifelong fascination with Russian women, and, during the winter of 1988, she embarked on a month-long journey of self-discovery, travelling around the Soviet Union to compile the interviews for this book.

In the country that pioneered legal abortions, active childbirth techniques and sexual revolution, Soviet scholars are now beginning for the first time since the 1920s to research patterns of gender difference. So what are we to make of the female obstetrician who tells the author that women don't want to see their husbands during and after childbirth because "they don't have their make-up with them"? Or the sexologist who says that women are brought up to think sexual pleasure is "not nice"? Or the world-class chess-player who regards herself as an anomaly since women are "biologically determined to think about domestic issues and nurturing others", rather than playing chess?

Time and again, the women here talk of some "immutable female essence". This fatalistic reaction to Marxism's emphasis on the central importance of the environment helps to explain the current nostalgia for pre-revolutionary gender roles. Women are getting married younger and younger. Women exhausted by the double burden of paid work and housework complain, yet still insist that men's place is not in the kitchen. Mothers instil into their daughters a pathological concern for domestic skills, "womanliness" and personal appearance. As fashion becomes increasingly competitive, women use clothes to gain social status and esteem. There is a growing tendency to blame the "over-emancipated, masculinised woman" for current social problems such as hooliganism, alcoholism, rising divorce rates and abandoned children.

Hence, too, many women's paradoxical longing for the ceremony and decorum of religion. As one put it: "We're being drawn back to liturgy because it offers the reawakening of an *internal* culture, which is what the reforms are about."

The Russian Orthodox church has always laid heavy emphasis on the redemptive force of female suffering. Yet the author also meets many younger women unwilling to accept this burden or to return to the cruel sexual inequalities which existed before 1917.

Elvira, descended from a 19th-century female revolutionary, and the only woman here to call herself a feminist, wants state structures to enable women to pursue careers and raise families. Women like her want real equality, "not the sort which means equal rights to lug bricks and grain beyond the 30-pound limit defined for women workers". Elvira believes that because women had their independence forced upon them during the last war, few of them got used to it, and many have passed on to their daughters their terror of being unmarried. "So now we're still stuck with the great value of the male, who became so precious when there was such a dearth of them."

Gorbachev has often expressed his concern for women. He has upgraded the workplace women's soviets, which supervise everything that concerns women, from crèches to diet and labour regulations. So far the only concrete legislation on women has been to grant the six extra months of tenured but unpaid maternity leave, enabling a mother to stay at home till her child is two. Yet, however inadequate the present reforms may be, says one woman, they have liberated women from a sense of impending catastrophe. "Now we live with a different sense of time, a sense that after us will be many generations which will continue our work and our culture."

A writer's burdens

BURY MY HEART AT W H SMITH
Brian Aldiss
Hodder & Stoughton £13.95

David V Barrett

Most autobiographies contain far too much of their author; not this one. Of course *Bury My Heart at W H Smith* is full of anecdotes of the writing career, friends and travels of the author, but this is less a book about Brian Aldiss than about what writing has meant to him throughout his life, and his love affair with words:

"Words live in the head all day, like little serpents, pretty, dangerous, elusive... I only really write novels for the sake of turning experience into words, the writer's Midas touch. Words play the magician... I have caught hold of them and turned them into my life's work. In turn they have enslaved me."

Brian Wilson Aldiss is perhaps Britain's best known and most respected living science fiction writer, and *Bury My Heart* is published just in time for his sixty-fifth birthday this month. Unknown to Aldiss, another book was being prepared as a birthday present from his friends. *A is for Brian* (Avernus, limited edition £25) is a collection of appreciations, anecdotes, stories and poems by 43 of his family, friends and colleagues over the years, including Sir Kingsley Amis, Doris Lessing and Michael Moorcock, and the film director, Ken Campbell.

The two books read together give a fuller picture of Aldiss; the warmth, generosity and geniality appreciated by his friends are qualities which he doesn't laud himself. What comes through from Aldiss's own book is a man who is gregarious yet private, fun-loving yet deeply thoughtful, arrogant yet humble—the ideal set of personality contradictions for a writer. His first job after returning from the war in Burma was in an Oxford bookshop, "a rich but chastening environment for a budding author". There he saw once-popular novels relegated to the shilling shelves, learning his first lesson about the transience of literary popularity.

Aldiss's first book, *The Brightfount Diaries* (1955), came from a series of fictional diary pieces he wrote for the trade paper, the *Bookseller*, based on his experiences in that first bookshop. His next, his first SF novel, owed its existence to the lucky chance that his publisher, Sir Geoffrey Faber, enjoyed SF—an even less respectable genre then than it is now. It is largely Aldiss, along with Amis and Robert Conquest, who brought a measure of respectability to science fiction, both through his own writing and as literary editor of the *Oxford Mail* and SF editor for Penguin Books.

Bury My Heart follows Aldiss through the many ups and downs of a writer's life, and is liberally laced with his observations of what it means to be a writer. A recurrent theme of the book, for example, is the high incidence of clinical depression among writers. "A wish to unburden oneself is," he says, "an indication that one is burdened."

Becoming a writer, Aldiss claims, is much easier than continuing to be one once you know from experience what the life entails. An author, like an actor and a painter, "may most readily assert himself through his writing and be, in real life, uneasy about an assertion of individuality; from which it follows that his most valid self-expression comes through his work rather than through himself".

This is a salutary book for aspiring writers to read, whatever their chosen literary field. Aldiss, after all, has not restricted himself to science fiction; his "Stubbs" trilogy, about the crisis of sexual identity of young soldiers in Burma, is well regarded, and his SF criticism, particularly the seminal history of science fiction, *Billion Year Spree* (rather than its recent update to *Trillion*), is essential reading.

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1990

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The dates for the rest of 1990 are set out below, and further information is readily available from the PBFA office, P.O. Box 66, Cambridge CB1 3PD. (Tel: 0223 240921).

AUGUST 12th - 13th
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DECEMBER 9th - 10th

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Hb: 0-415-03196-6: £30.00
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Feminist Review
Edited by the **Feminist Review Collective**
Feminist Review is the UK's leading socialist feminist journal, publishing work by women and providing intelligent and lively debate on political and cultural issues. 1990 issues include (34) Perverse Politics, a special issue on lesbianism; and (36) on the debates between feminists on pornography & censorship.
Subscription Rates: UK individuals: £18. UK institutions: £40.

ROUTLEDGE

For further information please contact: The Promotion Department, Routledge, 11 New Fetter Lane, London EC4P 4EE. Telephone: 071-583 9855

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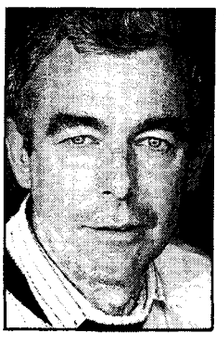
Mrs Nice Guy

How political pug Kenneth Clarke was bailed out by his soothing deputy

The headlines read: "Storm in Richmond Terrace tea cup: no breakages." Last month's statement by Kenneth Clarke that the community care bit of the NHS Act was to be phased in over three years had been widely anticipated. It was an anti-climax.



David Townsend

Frustrated by the prime minister and chancellor, forced into postponement, Mr Clarke felt obliged to throw his considerable weight around. He kicked sand in the faces of seven-stone local authority weaklings, whom he chose to blame for the delay. His shadow, Robin Cook, ever nimble on his feet, denounced the minister for abandoning elderly people. Of course, he would probably have denounced him if the original timetable had gone ahead.

The secretary of state warmed to his task. Phasing had become necessary because of the local authorities' irresponsibility. They were guilty of imposing "excessive levels of community charge on their residents". Then the knee in the civic groin: "They are not managing their services and their spending so that they deliver good quality services effectively within reasonable spending limits."

As a result, a new timetable has been set. Predictably, the main cost and contentious part will come in year three, after the next general election. This is the transfer to local authorities of part of the estimated sum of social security spending on the "care" element of private residential care. At present that is between £1 and £1.5 billion annually. Not even the DSS can calculate it accurately. Local authorities of all persuasions had argued that, without adequate funding, the proposed scheme for local authorities to regulate the private sector and offer alternatives would not work.

The rest of community care—planning, training, assessment—will go ahead, though more slowly. One or two special items will be available in April 1991. These include a small three-year specific grant of £30 million annually for mental-illness service developments. Its small size means a very limited impact. The question of who pays at the end of three years is not answered. Quite possibly the £100 million plus, spent annually at present through joint finance between local authorities and health authorities, will be expected to absorb the costs. Mr Clarke also announced an even smaller sum of £2 million, which had been earmarked for drug and alcohol abuse schemes.

Now, his number two, Virginia Bottomley, does not play in his political pugs' league. To her fell the private task of playing Mrs Nice Guy. She sent out copies of the Clarke statement to all regional health and local authority social services chairmen. Her covering letter was mollifying (not to say mollycoddling). Her role is clearly to accentuate the positive. The delay was to be welcomed "because we can use it to ensure our energies are used to service better outcomes for those we serve". Nothing about poll tax or poorly managed services. Far from it. "Many people have been working hard towards what was always a challenging deadline." Indeed the extra time now being played

Bottomley sent out Clarke's statement. Her covering letter was mollifying (not to mention mollycoddling)

means we can "prepare the ground more thoroughly, and your support and leadership will be vital in ensuring we reap the benefits which the new phasing can provide."

The new phasing will certainly be welcome in some quarters. Most local authorities could have shambled to the starting line in April 1991, but more like weight-lifters on huge doses of steroids rather than properly trained athletes. There might, in consequence, have been serious after-effects.

The NHS will, in at least one respect, be pleased about the delay: the reforms planned on the backs of the envelopes which the secretary of state prepared for them still have to be implemented in April 1991. Community care was just one more, somewhat peripheral, burden.

Full implementation also promised really serious arguments in 1991 over nursing home and private residential care admissions, between the local authorities in their cash-limited "gatekeeping" role and hospital doctors, in particular. The doctors sometimes have financial interests in such homes and, more importantly, want their hospital beds emptied quickly.

Delaying implementation has thus put the homes' proprietors back on the DSS life-support system and averted an unresolved clash of interests. In the short term it will not make much difference to elderly people, whose choice was not extensive in any case.

There are difficulties for the government. Poll tax may have been saved, social security has not. Community care was originally about protecting social security from welfare banditry in general. Local authorities were the reluctant choice to ride shotgun. Since the stage coach is no longer rolling either the money continues to be lifted for the next couple of years, or some other kind of control will have to be imposed. Securicor was mentioned in one recently leaked Department of Health paper. Other answers on more envelopes to the secretaries of state for health and social security.

One further consequence of postponement will be to give impetus to the abandonment of direct residential provision for elderly people by local authorities of all political colours. Most have, for a mixture of ideological, financial or quality reasons, initiated a variety of sell-offs, staff buy-outs, charitable trusts and simple closures. These bring legal and financial difficulties, not least possible penalties under the standard spending assessments, but the benefits can be measured just as readily.

There is the prospect of the continuing receipt of social-security benefits. There will be relief, ironically, from the attentions of the community care inspectors still required by April 1991. There will be the freedom from the need to find capital to maintain these homes. Where elderly services go, can those for mental health or handicap be far behind?

In all of this one giant remains asleep. That is the attitude of public sector trade unions, and Nalgo in particular. There is an unhappy precedent. Part of the 1983 Mental Health Act, relating to examinations needed to gain specialist "approved social worker" status, was stopped by Nalgo's opposition. The supine response of the local authorities and Kenneth Clarke (again—then the junior health minister) was to postpone its implementation. Permanently.

Sclerotic twitchings have been detected at national level over community care. The three-year programme gives a greater chance for knees to jerk.

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VOLUNTEER NOTICE BOARD is a free service provided by New Statesman & Society with financial assistance from Thames Television's Help programme. Interested organisations are invited to send their copy (approximately 45 words) to Dawn King at New Statesman & Society, Foundation House, Perseverance Works, 38 Kingsland Road, London, E2 8DQ by Friday preceding publication date. Please note this service is for recruiting volunteers only. If you have salaried vacancies contact the Classified Department on 071-739-1645.

COUNCIL for the Protection of Rural England is seeking a volunteer to assist its Records Officer with keeping its paper files and reference section up to date. Reliability, a meticulous approach and an eye for detail is needed to carry out this job. Reasonable travel expenses are offered in exchange for commitment to a minimum of one day per week. Please contact Anne Wheelwright at CPRE, 25 Buckingham Palace Rd, London, SW1W OPP, Tel. 071 976 6433.

BONDWAY NIGHTSHELTER, an emergency provision for homeless men, requires volunteers (aged 18-30) to work for approximately six months. An allowance and accommodation provided. We recruit throughout the year, so welcome applications from those wishing to be considered at a later stage. For further details contact please contact: Volunteer Coordinator, PO Box 374, London, SW8 1SJ and enclose S.A.E.

ARE YOU AN EXPERIENCED Accountant? Prepared to give a couple of hrs p/week to a very worthwhile cause? Selby House is a small, enthusiastic housing project which provides accommodation + support to 12 people with learning difficulties (in South London). We are looking for a Treasurer who will make a real contribution to the project. For more information contact Helen Platts at 6 Derwent Rd, London SE20 8SW. Tel: 081 659 8455.

THE JOINT COUNCIL for the Welfare of Immigrants (JCWI), which advises and represents people with immigration and nationality problems and campaigns against the racism in immigration control, needs help on a regular basis with photocopying, sending out publications, bookkeeping and other administrative tasks. Training (in data processing, if interested), travel and lunch expenses provided. Please tel. Phoebe or Roland on 071 251 8708.

HUDDERSFIELD GAY Switchboard are looking for new volunteers to listen to callers who phone us on issues such as 'coming out', relationship problems, HIV+/AIDS, and to meet callers face to face. Volunteers must be gay men or women. Call (0484) 538070 any Sunday eve between 6 and 9 pm.

CHILD POVERTY ACTION Group, Britain's leading anti-poverty group, needs volunteers to despatch publications. One day a week. Hectic, friendly environment. Expenses + training given. Call Debbie: 071-253 3406/3709.

FRENCH TRANSLATORS SOS Sahel, an environmental agency working in Africa, needs French/English translators of oral history interviews with Sahelian villagers and pastoralists. Please contact: SOS Sahel, 1 Tolpuddle Street, London, N1 OXT. Tel. 01-837 9129.

VOLUNTEER DRIVER/CARER wanted for young disabled art students in small project on South coast for September - July. Free accom., own room + £40.50 p/w living expenses. Good opportunity to take time out of your life while thinking about what to do with the rest of it! Contact Cindy 0243 264660.

A VOLUNTEER Horticulturist is needed by Ashram Community Service Project for Ashram Acres, a land use project in Inner City Birmingham, growing Asian and other vegetables organically on derelict land. The neighbourhood is multi-racial. We urgently need an experienced/trained horticulturist to plan and work in the garden. This would be a great opportunity to gain experience and work with a variety of people. There would also be an opportunity to live in a radical Christian community. Contact: Ute Jaeckel (021 773 7061). Ashram Community Service Project, 23/25 Grantham Road, Sparkbrook, Birmingham, B11 1LU.

THAMES **HELP**

Thames Help, presented by Jackie Spreckley, is a four minute local social action programme. It appears four times a week on Thames Televison at 5.55 approximately (check TV Times for details). Here is a summary of this week's programmes.

This week we are looking at some of the groups and individuals who in their different ways are committed to Greening the City.

Monday 13th August – Camley Street Natural Park

Leigh Thornton is the Project Manager of the Camley Street Natural Park, 2.5 acres of trees, water and meadow land set up in 1983 by the London Wildlife Trust on a strip of formerly derelict land just behind the huge railway stations of Kings Cross and St. Pancras.
Despite it's enormous educational potential the park is now under threat from the Channel Tunnel rail link development and the London Wildlife Trust have recently launched a campaign to secure the future of the site.
For more information, write to: The London Wildlife Trust, 80 York Way, London, N1 9AG.

Tuesday 14th August – Kentish Town City Farm

Kentish Town City Farm has been developed on a formerly derelict 5 acre site sandwiched between railway lines, housing developments and the back streets of NW5.
Although the idea of a farm in the middle of the city may seem strange, Kentish Town Farm Worker, John Langan, is convinced of the benefits to both the local community and the urban environment.
Details of city farms in London, write: City Farms, Thames Help, PO Box 2LP, London W1A 2LP.

Wednesday 15th August – Allotments

Allotments are one of the most traditional ways of creating green spaces in the city and Charlie Routley has devoted the ten years since retiring from work to establishing and improving the allotments at Needham Terrace, deep in the heart of Cricklewood, NW2! Contact your local authority to find out about allotments in your area.

Thursday 16th August – City Gardens

Feyziye Harray in common with many city dwellers lives in a flat without access to even the smallest scrap of a garden. Yet she has managed to create the most spectacular balcony garden that over the last five summers has literally stopped the traffic!

For more information, phone in after the programme on 071-388 8282, or write to the address below.

THAMES TELEVISION

Thames Help, Thames Television PLC, 149 Tottenham Court Road, London W1P 9LL. Telephone: 01-387 9494.

WE ARE A CZECHOSLOVAK couple looking for volunteer work for at least 6 - 12 months. I am a Psychologist (University grad- uated) and have been working for 9 years at a home for handicapped & deprived children. My husband is an amateur sportsman. We are both 38 yrs old with 2 daughters. Contact:- Annemarie Kajtarova, Zvolenska 34, 821 09 Bratislava, Czechoslovakia.

F.L.A.T. (Facility for Living and Assessment Together) requires Community Project Assistants. The F.L.A.T. Project trains and assesses people who have learning difficulties (mental handicap) to live more independently in the community. Hours: 35 p/w and a personal allowance of £154.76 per month, free accommodation and bills, excluding personal telephone calls. Interested? Contact F.L.A.T. on 071 403 1542.

THREE ACRES COMMUNITY Play Project London NW3 needs volunteers to help run their Saturday Club for disabled and able-bodied children. A valuable and rewarding experience. Expenses paid. Please contact Maria Pavledis or Julie Bosch 071 722 0331.

THE NATIONAL COUNCIL for Civil Liberties is looking for volunteers to help paint our building from 30 July - 10 August. Travel and lunch expenses are reimbursed and a good time is guaranteed. If you can help on any or all of these dates, please ring Marie Ryan at Liberty on 071 403 3888.

SOUTH WEST SURREY - local volunteers wanted for Helpline being launched for carers of people with mental health problems. Volunteers work from home, must have phone, preferably experience of caring. Contact Margaret, Guildford (0483) 576269 for further details. Helpline, not yet fully operational, is (0483) 38936.

GOOD IN EMERGENCIES? Volunteers are needed to staff a 24 hour helpline providing assistance to people detained in police stations in Southwark. No legal knowledge is necessary. You will be given training in emergency procedures. Please contact Knox Daniel on 071-738 7105 (24 hour answerphone).

BURY ST. EDMUNDS Cyrenians are seeking a volunteer to live, work and share their life with homeless people in an exciting new project, providing accommodation for 10 homeless people. Valuable experience will be gained. Volunteers are expected to stay for at least six months. Free board and lodging + generous weekly allowance. Write to Susan Woodward, Project Coordinator, Britannia House, 28 Ipswich St., Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk IP33 1SX for an application form and job description, or telephone 0284 756122.

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Foundation House, Perseverance Works,
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Appointments

PRESS & PUBLICITY

PRESS CO-ORDINATOR

PO2

£19,505-£21,117 pa incl

Could you organise a busy Press Office? Are you good at dealing with the *media? Can you write well against tight deadlines and under pressure?* If so, you could be just the person we need to join our Press, Publicity and Information team in the key role of Press Co-ordinator.
Interviews: Week commencing 10th September, 1990.
Please quote ref: PPS 091.

Application forms from the Recruitment Office, Town Hall, Mare Street, London E8 1EA or telephone 081-986 5331 (24 hour answering service). Closing date for completed applications is 5 p.m. on the 24th August, 1990.
All applications for jobs are considered on merit, with equal opportunities for women, black and ethnic minorities, lesbians and gay men and people with disabilities. Job share applications are welcomed with or without a partner.

HACKNEY COUNCIL
Working for local people

ST ERME HOUSE

AUTISTIC COMMUNITY FOR YOUNG ADULTS

NEAR TRURO, CORNWALL

16 residents accommodated in 2 houses, day centre on campus for 19 (3 non-residents).

DEVON & CORNWALL AUTISTIC SOCIETY

An experienced voluntary body working in close co-operation with the statutory authorities offers an interesting, challenging opportunity for an

OFFICER IN CHARGE/MANAGER

Salary appropriate National Autistic Society scale

The ideal candidate will have experience with voluntary/statutory Mental Handicapped Services and with autism in particular.

An appropriate qualification is required together with relevant professional and managerial experience.

Please apply for application form in writing to: Chairman of Managers, Tregolds, St Merryn, Cornwall PL28 8PZ.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Children's Resource Group

Assistant Intermediate Treatment Officer - Female

Sc.5 £12,963 - £14,067 p.a. inc. pro rata.
22 1/2 hours per week.

We need an I.T. Officer (girls and young women) to work mainly in the West Hampstead area, to provide resources and group work for girls and young women who do not benefit from existing resources.

The ability to work in a team situation and undertake some evening work is essential. You must also be able to promote and develop girls work in the I.T. Section and generally.

Section 7:2(e) of the 1975 Sex Discrimination Act applies to this post.

Application form from and to be returned to: Social Services, Departmental Personnel Unit, Willing House, 356/364 Gray's Inn Road, London WC1X 8BH. Tel: 071-837 5621 (ansaphone). Quoting ref 10/114/NSS. Closing date 24th August 1990.

Camden Services

equal opportunity employer

Applicants are considered on the basis of their suitability for the post, with equal opportunities for women, black/ethnic minorities, lesbians and gay men and people with disabilities, and regardless of marital status, age, creed/religion and unrelated criminal conviction. All posts are open for job-sharing.

Bloomsbury Health Authority
Mental Health Unit

Latimer House Day Hospital for the Elderly
40 Hansen Street, London W1

2 NURSING ASSISTANTS - GRADE A

Latimer House is an assessment day hospital in central London, providing a service to elderly people experiencing mental health difficulties, particularly dementia, who live in North-East Westminster. An active multidisciplinary team assesses over 350 new clients each year and liaises with a range of statutory and voluntary agencies to formulate care plans based on individual need, maximisation of independence and the maintenance of dignity.

If you are interested in working with the elderly and would like to know more about the job and Latimer House phone Chris Stone on (071) 380 9186/7 for an informal discussion or to arrange a visit.

Application and Job Description forms are available from Charlotte Perry, Operational Administrator, on (071) 387 4411 x396.

Applications considered from candidates willing to job share.

Taking a fresh look at Equal Opportunities .

Closing date: 24th August, 1990.

NEW STATESMAN & SOCIETY

To find out more about the strength of our Classified Recruitment Section ring 071-739 1645

Speak to Michael Breen or Susan Newcombe

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CSMH

THE COMMUNITY TEAM – CSMH

Working with People with learning difficulties in Camden The Community Team is redefining and consolidating its service aims. As part of this process we have revised our job descriptions and are now in a position to advertise the following posts.

OFFICE MANAGER
Salary at £12,963

This is a new post and carries with it the administrative responsibility for the whole team. You will need to have experience of setting up and maintaining computerised and manual office systems. Time wil be allowed for this at the start of the job.

We would like you to have some experience of publicity work and newsletters as this is a significant element of the job. Hours are 35 p.w. (10am – 6pm, Mon – Fri). One hour for lunch.

SERVICE DEVELOPMENT WORKER
Salary at £12,963

This is one of 3 full-time posts working on the Goldhurst Project, an innovative service response to the needs of people whose behaviour has been seen to challenge more traditional services. As one of the two Service Development Workers, you would be responsible with the Service Co-ordinator for setting up and working upon individually tailored packages of non residential support.

You will be someone with previous experience of supporting Adults with learning difficulties and have a clear understanding and a commitment to 'The Five Accomplishments'. Hours are 35 p.w. (some evening and weekend work). Initially the project will operate for 10 week periods.

ACCESS CO-ORDINATOR
Salary at £14,067

Access is about building relationships between people with a learning difficulty and their wider communities. It aims to seek out active and committed members of the community prepared to become involved in supportive social networks and the harnessing of community resources. We would expect you to involve consumers of Access as valued citizens.

Hours are 35 p.w. (inc evening and weekend work)

SESSIONAL WOMAN MUSIC WORKER
£11.85 p.h (£17.18 p.w.)

You will be co-running a weekly evening session on Wednesday evenings between 6.30 – 8.00pm. The workshop has been running for 2 years and its members have had a good time exploring a wide range of different musical experiences. The workshop has recently produced a tape for sale (copies available at £2 each!).

You will need to have guitar or keyboard skills to compliment the skills of the other worker and members of the workshop. Section 7(2) Sex Discrimination Act (1975) applies. Hours 1½ p.w.

THREE PART-TIME SESSIONAL WORKERS

You will work in one of our clubs for adults which runs on Tuesday evenings in a Community centre in Camden. The club offers a variety of different leisure activities inside and outside the centre.

We are looking for people who see people with learning difficulties as their equals and are prepared to work alongside them in the development and running of their social clubs. You will join our existing team of sessional workers, volunteers and full-time staff who will support and supervise the session.

If appointed you will be employed by Camden Education Authority and seconded to and managed by CSMH.

HOURS: 3 per week, 6 weeks holiday pay and sick pay.
PAY: £6 minimum depending on qualifications.

Experience is valued by CSMH as much as formal qualifications, particularly where it has involved voluntary or community work in a multi-racial inner city area. CSMH wishes to employ more people with disabilities and people from ethnic minorities.

Please quote the specific job title you are interested in when asking for an application form.

Closing date for all posts is:- 17th August. Application forms and additional information from:

The Community Team
245 Royal College St, NW1
071-485 8177

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If you book three consecutive ads you get an extra one absolutely free

You can now reach more than 250,000 readers every week with a small advertisement in *New Statesman & Society*.

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STONHAM HOUSING ASSOCIATION
(Southampton Branch)

Nationwide Stonham provides shared accommodation for 3,000 people, many of whom have recently left institutional care. The Association's main aim is to assist residents to resettle into the community. Each of our 190 Projects is managed in partnership with a voluntary committee.

Our Southampton Branch houses and supports 300 residents, with a variety of different needs in 50 locations throughout Southern Hampshire, employing over 100 staff.

As a result of growth and restructing, the Association invites applications for the new post of

PROJECT MANAGER
(Mental Health) Salary - £14,232

The Job:

To be responsible for the SHARP Project which enjoys a national and international reputation for innovation and good practice and is part of the National Demonstration Service for Psychiatric Rehabilitation.

To provide services to 120 individuals in 20 properties with long term mental health problems, and monitor and improve standards.

To be responsible for the work of 5 Project Leaders, each with their own team of staff, and play a key part in the personal and professional growth of the staff.

To contribute to and implement local and national policies and be a member of the Branch's senior management team.

To help develop other related services to people with mental health problems.

Candidates should be able to demonstrate:-

1) Knowledge and understanding of special needs housing
2) Managerial experience of service and delivery
3) Successful experience of working with people with mental health problems.

Condition of services presently include:-

22, rising to 27, days annual leave
Car leasing scheme
Generous contributory pension scheme
39 hour week Flexitime system

For an informal discussion about the vacancy telephone Richard Baritt (0703) 331593.

Closing date for completed applications: 22nd August 1990.

Please write for a job description, application form and additional information, quoting reference PM(MH), to:-

Stonham Housing Association, 30 Oxford Street Southampton SO1 1DN

The post is open to Job Share applications.

PROJECT WORKER — WITNEY

We require a Project Worker for the Witney project, which offers short term accommodation for six male residents, many of whom will be Probation referrals.

We are looking for someone with an understanding of the residents' needs, with a mature and flexible approach. S/he will be expected to help residents in a practical way to acquire skills for moving on; a knowledge of the benefits system would be an advantage.

Salary: £10,290

Closing Date: 22nd August, 1990.

For application forms please contact:

Stonham Housing Association Limited, Imperial House, Southwood Lane, CHELTENHAM, Glos. GL50 2QH Tel.: 0242 — 528778

Stonham
Housing Association Ltd

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(PART-TIME)

Refugee Action works with refugees from Vietnam in the UK, providing services of reception, resettlement, family reunion and community development.

We are now seeking an Accounts/Clerical Administrative Worker for our Head Office in Derby. The Worker will mostly be involved in operating and keeping records for RA's bank accounts, administering the payroll and processing invoices and expenses claims.

The postholder must have experience of bookkeeping, be able to pay attention to detail, and enjoy working as part of a small team. Experience of PAYE, general office work, typing, and knowledge of the languages and cultures of refugees from Vietnam are desirable.

Hours of work: 17½ per week (excluding breaks).

Salary: £12,700 pro rata (half-time).

Closing date for applications: Friday, August 31, 1990.

For job description and application form please contact: Sheila Fox, Refugee Action, The Cedars, Oakwood, Derby DE2 4FY. Tel: 0332 833310.

This office is accessible to wheelchairs.

Refugee Action is working towards Equal Opportunities.

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CAMPAIGN FOR NUCLEAR Disarmament (CND) requires volunteers in the following areas: the new fundraising unit, distribution and sales department, central office. Lunch and travel expenses provided as well as a friendly working atmosphere, and the occasional chance of paid work. Please contact Laura or Lorraine on 071 700 2393 or write to 162 Holloway Rd, London N7 8DQ.

NICARAGUA HEALTH FUND urgently needs volunteers during the month of August to help stuff envelopes on Wed. evenings after work. Small, friendly office near Oxford Circus tube, tea, coffee and chocolate biscuits. Phone Joy or Sarah on 071 580 4292 or just come along after 5.00 pm to 83 Margaret St, London W1N 7HB.

JOAN RUDDOCK MP urgently seeks volunteer to help in her (cramped!) Westminster office. Must be flexible, hard-working, cheerful etc and preferably living in S.E. London. Local travel paid. If interested call NOW on 071 219 4513/6206.

EL SALVADOR and Guatemala Committees for Human Rights require two volunteers: A treasurer with accounts experience (particularly voluntary sector), prepared to commit several hours per month plus occasional management meetings. Also an urgent action co-ordinator, at least one day a week for an indefinite period. Expenses paid. 83 Margaret Street, W1 (071-631 4200).

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Essential information on Australia, Canada, Europe, New Zealand & USA, including potential employers.
Send Stamped Addressed Envelope for details and prices to: Bridget Harrison, Walker & Walker Emigration, 10 Westminster Ave, Kirkby, Notts. NG17 7HY.

Agenda
Wed 15 August

LABOUR'S DEFENCE POLICY; Mike Gapes, 7.30pm, Cole Room, 11 Dartmouth Street, SW1. Central London Fabian Society. All welcome.

Help Wanted

THERAPY: Documentary Producer, Ch4 seeks information from people who have been abused or maltreated in therapy. Strict confidence, ring Ronnie Mitch 091-2846-751 or write Box no. (31) 385.

Personal

PENFRIENDS, mainly East European, some other countries. Send £5 for our current list to WINGS, PO Box 76 Stamford Bridge, York, YO4 1YG.

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JOURNALIST, LONDON-BASED, attractive, bright, seeks kind man with interest in the Arts, liking for cats and inclination for long-term loving. Please write to Box (31) 376.

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PROFESSIONAL (computing, maths graduate) man, divorced, psychologically free, near playwright, India-born, breadwinner/house-husband seeks affectionate, intelligent lady under 40 from anywhere, veggie preferred. You have/want child(ren). Write to Box (31) 379.

RESTLESS SCOTTISH STAG (grey muzzled) hears Debussy and wistfully remembers past southern adventures. He wonders if any sleek urban hind desires cantering on the wild side. Please write to Box (31) 380.

INTELLIGENT PROFESSIONAL WOMAN, 33. Warm and affectionate enjoys Arts, walking, talking & much more seeks similar man for long term relationship. London/Kent. Please write to Box (31) 381.

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SELF-EMPLOYED PROFESSIONAL MAN, 50, outgoing, tolerant, friendly, but caught in dismally deficient domestic situation, seeks cheerful woman to form Escape Committee. West/East Midlands. Please reply Box (31) 384.

WANTED-GENTLE GIANT with big heart for country girl with same. N/S, 34, attractive interested in life, arts, travel. Box (31) 383.

SCOTS/ENGLISH WOMAN, retired professional, slim, warmblooded, openminded - interests include music, walking, politics - seeks agreable man for friendship initially. Central Scotland. Please write to Box (31) 387.

INDEPENDENT MAN, LONDON-BASED, optimistic and adventurous, early 40s, seeks honest, friendly woman. Interested in left politics, green ideas, countryside, travel. Cyclist a bonus! Reply to Box (29) 365.

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MECHANICAL DATA
Dimensions (mm)
Page 267×200
Double col 267×132
Halfpage 131×200
Quarterpage 131×98
1/6 page 131×65
Column widths
Display
1 column 65
2 column 132
3 column 200
Classified
1 column 45
2 column 98
3 column 149
4 column 200
Film: Negative, right reading, emulsion side down
Registration: punch registered
Screen: (4-col): 150/in, 60/cm
Screen: (mono): 120/in, 48/cm
Printing: Heat-set web offset

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Subscription rates
UK £55
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USA Air mail $146; air speed $99
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Incorporating 'The Nation', 'The Athenaeum', and 'The Week-end Review'.
Registered as a newspaper.
Typesetting by ECM, 36-42 Clerkenwell Road, London EC1. Colour origination by Graphic Ideas, 135-139 Curtain Road, London EC2.
Printed by BPCC Business Magazines (Colchester) Ltd, Sheepen Place, Colchester C03 3LJ (Tel: 577881). Distribution by COMAG, Tavistock Rd, West Drayton, Midx UB7 7Qe 0895 444055. Second-class postage paid at New York, NY USPS 382260. Air freight in US by Speedimpex USA Inc.
16mm and 35mm microfilms, 105mm microfiche and article copies are available through University Microfilms Inc, 300 North Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, Michigan 48106.

ENDGAMES

WEEKEND COMPETITION

No 3137 Set by E O Parrott
Holiday one-upmanship.

Report by Ms de Meaner
Back from two weeks in the fjells and fjords of Arctic Norway, I thank God I have been spared. The first week was all relentless heat and mosquitoes, whose attentions left me with over 90 (I counted) bites about the bod. Then the weather changed to torrential rain which so swelled the rivers that I got swept away on one crossing and had to swim for it, still wearing my anorak, rucksack and walking boots. What a relief it is to luxuriate in the safe harbour of command on the comp complex at Perseverance Works, sit at my calm and peaceful desk, and chortle at your little offerings. Chas F Garvey (not a winner this week) obviously moves in completely different circles from everyone else. As examples of comments designed to impress one's friends, he gives us: "I won the Youngest-looking Grandmother Contest at Butlins, Minehead, last year, didn't I Eric?" "Garcon, la potage est froid" (*sic*) and "Oh no, *we're* staying in Hove!" The rest of you can become rich on four quid per entry.

...and, thank God, Bangkok customs found it really was shampoo.
R J Pickles

I bought my francs six months ago—just a hunch.
Mark Ambrose

This is a bit of a pilgrimage for me. Great-grandfather was here with a punitive expedition in '96. One has to make amends somehow.
G Goatley

For me, this is a sort of working holiday, really. I'm writing a thesis on how ordinary people like you behave when they're abroad...
George Simmers

One night in the igloo, I got to the point where I nearly said, "Oh no! Not casseroled Arctic fox again!"
M E Ault

The town band plays the British national anthem every time we appear. Such a charming gesture!
George Moor

I always say that South Georgia is the Tenerife of the Antarctic.
A Boteman

Of course, Theroux and Thubron bellyached about this branchline until I showed them how to tamper with their tickets.

They named this place after me. Mind you, I was incognito at the time.

I had my snorkel fitted in Jermyn Street.
Bill Greenwell

Leaving East Berlin legally really takes all the thrill out, don't you find?
Ben Francis

I saw the Cameroons in training for the World Cup last year.
Katie Mallett

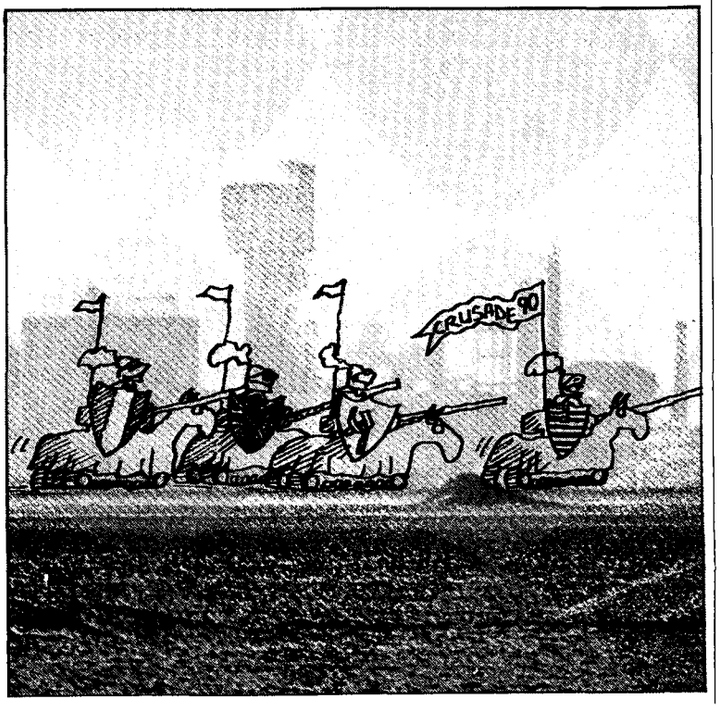
Concorde? Really? Well, you see, using it every week, as I do, for business purposes, it's a pleasant change to go on holiday at a more leisurely pace.
Watson Weeks

Going to the Dordogne, are you? Not a bad idea, I suppose, if you don't speak French.
Basil Ransome-Davies

We make a point of visiting the place every year like this, incognito—just to ensure, you know, that all the ancestors are present and correct!
Barbara Smoker

No 3140 Set by Ms de Meaner and P S Burton
As Boyd Tonkin pointed out in last week's theatre review, a rewritten Restoration version of *King Lear* with a happy ending was performed until 1823 (Lear and Cordelia safe; Cordelia paired off with Edgar). Rewritten happy endings for famous tragedies, or, alternatively, *unhappy* endings to comedies, to be in by 23 August. No more than 200 words.

GRAFFITI BY PAIGE



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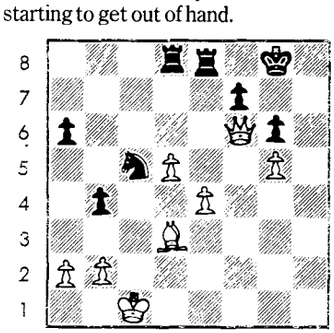
CHESS

This year's British Championships reach their climax in Eastbourne on Saturday. The whole event has been dedicated to the memory of Harry Baines, who served for many years as Chief Arbiter at the championship. Umpiring, refereeing, or (as we usually put it) "controlling" a chess tournament is an essential job, though it's bound to have a low profile as long as things are running smoothly. How would you like to sit through eleven rounds, never raising your voice above a hushed whisper, with the nearest thing to a crisis to look forward to being some clot contriving to lose on time? At least the British Chess Federation has a bit of domestic trouble to bite on, as both Lancashire and Yorkshire are threatening to secede, suspicious that the money they raise in levies through the clubs is not being well spent. This does seem to me a rather wild move by the two counties, if not an outright blunder. So, far from being a byword for profligacy, the BCF has made a major impact on international chess despite modest resources. Still, if the two counties are bent on disaffiliating, the national federation can hardly stop them. No doubt this goes some way to explaining the BCF's launch of a new direct membership scheme. Anyone interested in further details can contact the BCF HQ at 9a Grand Parade, St Leonards-on-Sea, East Sussex TN38 0DD (tel: 0424 442500). One of the packages on offer wraps membership of the BCF with a year's subscription to *Pergamon Chess*— which I hope is sufficient connection to work in a game featured in Ray Keene's "Game of the Month" article in the August issue. The winner, 16-year-old Gata Kamsky, has shot up to a world ranking of No 8, at 2650 in the latest Elo ratings. See how he trounced the old magician from Riga: **Kamsky—Tal, New York Open 1990. King's Indian. 1 d4 d6 2 Nf3 Nf6 3 c4 g6 4 Nc3 Bg7 5 e4 0-0 6 Be2 e5 7 Be3 exd4** It's probably a matter of taste, but I prefer either 7...Qe7 or 7...h6. In any case 7 Be3 has a considerable advantage over the more common 7 0-0: White's K is not yet committed. **8 Nxd4 Re8 9 Qc2 Qe7 10 f3 c6 11 g4 a6** A surprisingly passive response from Tal. 11...h5 would be a more combative treatment. **12 g5 Nfd7 13 h4 b5 14 h5 b4 15 hxg6 hxg6** It's clear enough that Black cannot tolerate 15...bxc3 16 Nf5. **16 Na4 d5 17 0-0-0! c5** This does seem the best chance of counterplay, since after 17...dxe4 18 f4! he has no answer to the attack in the h-file. **18 Nb3 d4 19 Bf4 Nc6 20 Rh4 Nde5 21 Rdh1 d3** The only way for Black to get some open lines of his own. **22 Bxd3 Nxf3 23 Rh7 Be5?** Surely only a miscalculation can have induced him to part with his best defender. Keene suggests instead 23...Nde5, ready to offer the exchange after 24 Nb6 Bb7, and that does seem a much better chance. **24 Bxe5 Qxe5** 24...Qxg5+ 25 Kb1 Qxe5 was an alternative, but in that case comes 26 Qg2 Nd4 27 Qh3 with a tremendous attack. **25 Qg2 Nd4** This way he can meet 26 Qh3 with 26...Qxg5+ and 27...Nf6, which might just hold. But Kamsky shows that a simple exchange is now sufficient. **26 Rh8+ Qxh8 27 Rxh8+ Kxh8 28 Nbxc5 Nxc5 29 Nxc5 Ne6 30 Na4 Bb7 31 Nb6 Rad8 32 Nd5 Kg7 33 Qf2 Bxd5 34 Qf6+ Kg8 35 cxd5 Nc5** *See Diagram.* With two Rooks against Queen and pawn Black has material equality. But White's central pawns dominate the board and Kamsky shuffles forward behind them. **36 Kd2! a5 37 Qd4 Nd7 38 Bb5 Rf8 39 e5 Nb8 40 d6 Nd7 41 Kd3 Rfe8 42 Bxd7 Rxd7 43 Ke4 Rdd8 44 Kd5 Rb8 45 d7 1-0** After 45...Red8 46 Kc6 Black has no defence against the thrust e5-e6, followed by Qf6 and Kc7. If he can beat Tal like that Kamsky may well be worth his rating of 2650. But a wider perspective brings all the numbers into question. On the latest rating list there are no fewer than 26 players with ratings over 2600, whereas back in 1980 there were only nine people in the world with active ratings above 2600 Elo points. Maybe the Grandmaster title has become debased, but surely 2600 Elo means something rather special. Alas, no. There is inflation built into the Elo system and it's starting to get out of hand.



George Botterill

HALDANE SOCIETY OF SOCIALIST LAWYERS

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Much of the Society's work is through a range of sub-committees where members come together and formulate their own programme of activity. There are sub-committees on crime, employment, gay and lesbian rights, housing, international law, legal services, race and immigration, women, and Northern Ireland. All members are sent details of sub-committee activities and are invited to participate.

The Society is the source of information and analysis not otherwise available. Our journal "Socialist Lawyer" carries feature articles from members as well as news and reviews. Recent articles in "Socialist Lawyer" include "A Bill of Rights for South Africa"; "The Birmingham Six Appeal"; a Symposium on Legal Services; an analysis of reproductive rights and a critique of the Housing Act 1988.

The Society is the UK affiliate of the International Association of Democratic Lawyers and sends delegates to its international conference.

We see support for the national liberation struggles, in Southern Africa and elsewhere as a vital task. Direct solidarity is provided through *Society members attending political trials as observers, for example in* Turkey; and participating in international delegations, for example to Chile to observe Pinochet's plebiscite.

Further details and membership information:- Tony Metzer, Haldane Society, Panther House, 38 Mount Pleasant, London WC1X OAP.

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